



# Issues and Challenges in Educational Equity for Aboriginals

Hon. Lillian Eva (Quan) Dyck, PhD, DLitt  
Senator


[www.sen.parl.gc.ca/ldyck/](http://www.sen.parl.gc.ca/ldyck/)

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# Outline

- Statistical Snapshots
  - Gaps in educational attainment
  - Why are there these gaps?
  - What needs to be done
  - The payoffs for society and the individual
  - Insights from an exception to the rule
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**The majority of Aboriginals in Canada  
in 2006 were Indian (First Nation).**


| <b>Aboriginal group</b> | <b>Numbers</b>   | <b>%</b>    |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Indian                  | 698,025          | <b>60%</b>  |
| Métis                   | 389,785          | <b>33%</b>  |
| Inuit                   | 50,485           | <b>4%</b>   |
| Multiple Abor ID        | (34,500)         | <b>(3%)</b> |
|                         |                  |             |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>1,172,790</b> |             |





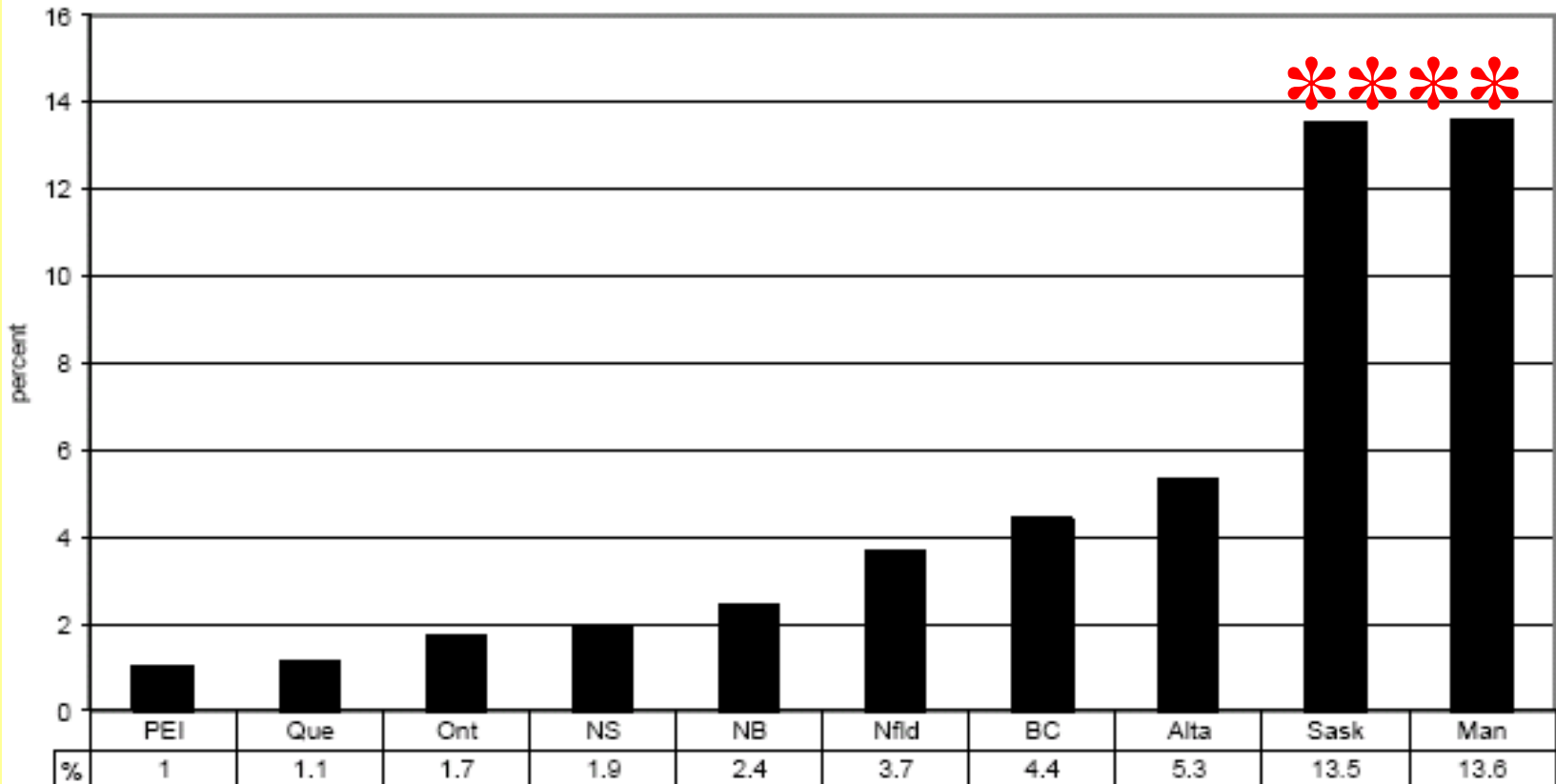
# The Aboriginal population varies regionally

| 2006         | % of population that was Aboriginal |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| Canada       | <b>4%</b>                           |
| Saskatchewan | <b>15%</b>                          |
| Nunavut      | <b>85%</b>                          |
| Ontario      | <b>2%</b>                           |



# Saskatchewan and Manitoba had the highest proportion of Aboriginals amongst the provinces

Figure 1  
Aboriginal identity population as proportion of  
total population, by province and territory, 2001 Census





● 60% of FN people live off reserve



The % of children (14 yrs of age and under) is higher in the Metis and FN populations and the % of children living with 1 parent is higher.

| Group           | % 14yrs of age or younger |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Non-Abor</b> | <b>17%</b>                |
| <b>Metis</b>    | <b>25%</b>                |
| <b>Off-R FN</b> | <b>31%</b>                |
| <b>On-R FN</b>  | <b>34%</b>                |

| Group (14 & under) | % living with just 1 parent |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Non-Abor</b>    | <b>17%</b>                  |
| <b>Metis</b>       | <b>31%</b>                  |
| <b>Off-R FN</b>    | <b>41%</b>                  |
| <b>On-R FN</b>     | <b>33%</b>                  |




# Young & Growing & single parent

50% of the Aboriginal population is under 25 yrs of age compared to 31% for other Canadians.

the Aboriginal population grew by 45% compared to only 8% for the rest of the Canadian population from 1996-2006.

30-40% of Aboriginal families are single parent compared to 17% for other Canadians.







The Brown Baby Boom

*vs*

The Greying, Aging Baby Boomers




# Aboriginals lag behind the non-Aboriginal population at all levels of education in Canada except for the trades

| <i>(Ages 25-64)</i> | % of<br>Aboriginals | % of Non-<br>Aboriginals |
|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Less than H. Sc.    | <b>34%</b>          | <b>15%</b>               |
|                     |                     |                          |
| Trades cert/diploma | <b>14%</b>          | <b>12%</b>               |
|                     |                     |                          |
| University degree   | <b>8%</b>           | <b>23%</b>               |
|                     |                     |                          |



If all things were equal,

80,400 more Aboriginal people in  
Canada would have had a  
university degree in 2006.



Women, esp. Aboriginal women, had higher levels of education than men, except for the Trades, in Saskatchewan in 2006

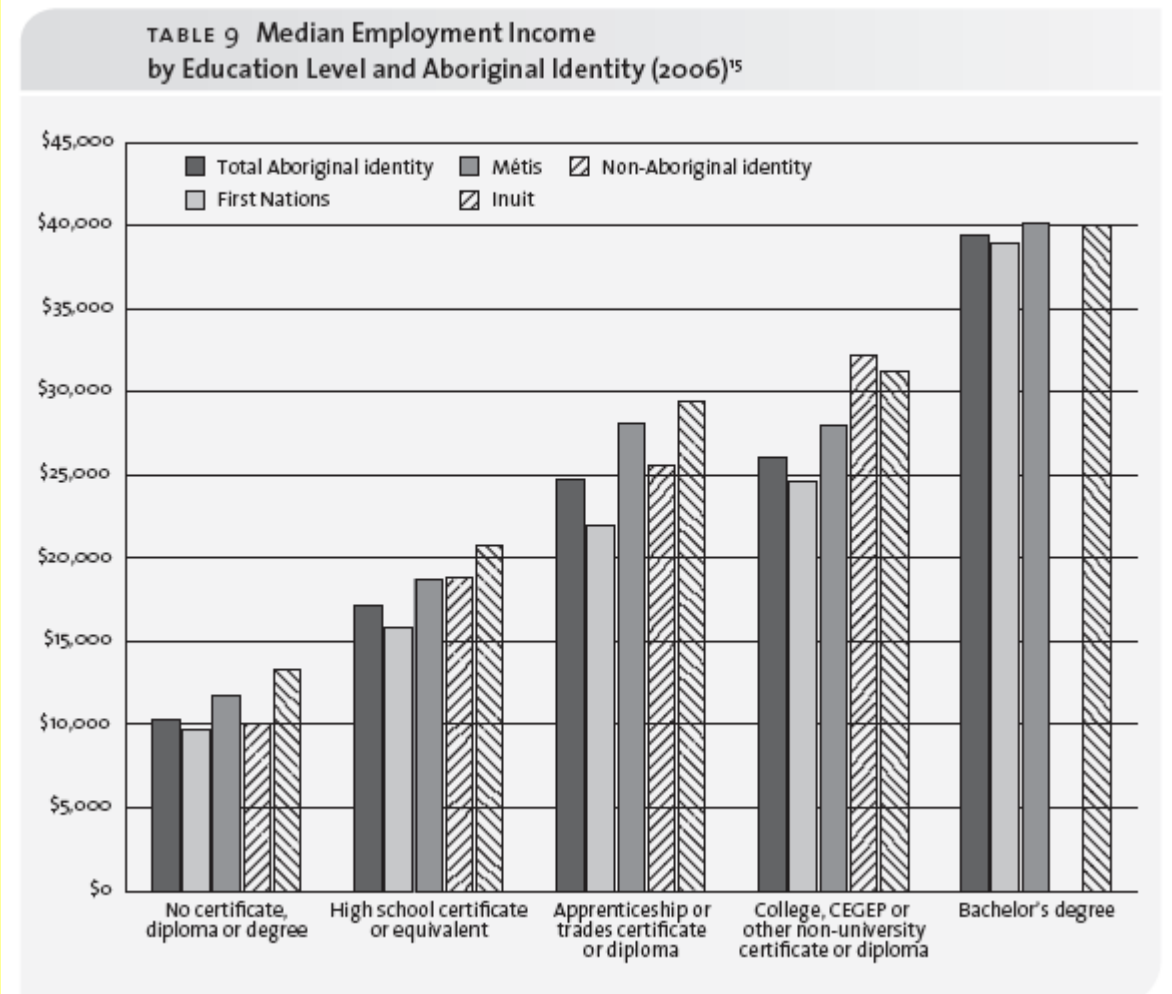
| <i>(Ages 15 and over)</i> | % of female<br><b>Aboriginals</b> | % of male<br><b>Aboriginals</b> | % of female<br>Non-Abor's | % of male<br>Non-Abor's |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| < H. Sc                   | <b>48%</b>                        | <b>52%</b>                      | <b>36%</b>                | <b>40%</b>              |
| Trades                    | 7%                                | 12%                             | 10%                       | 16%                     |
| Bachelor's                | <b>6%</b>                         | <b>3%</b>                       | <b>12%</b>                | <b>9%</b>               |




# Economic benefits of education

- The lifetime increase in salary with a high school diploma is about \$500,000.
- And another \$500,000 with a degree.
- “The more you learn, the more you earn” (Prof Eric Howe).

An Aboriginal has to have a bachelor's degree in order to earn as much as a non-Aboriginal.



Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Apr 2010,  
The income gap between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of Canada




# **Investing in Aboriginal education will lead to substantial payoffs for the individual as well as for Canada**

- If the gap in high school completion rates in 2001 for Aboriginals was closed by 2017, the gain in GDP would be \$62 billion and \$8.3 billion for 2017 alone.



# “Bridging the Aboriginal Education Gap in Saskatchewan”


GDI and Prof Eric Howe (UofS), Nov 2011

- Closing the gap could yield savings up to \$90 billion – the lost benefits are greater than all sales of potash in the history of Sask!
  - Aboriginal people in SK are an even greater resource than potash.
  - Closing the gap could produce an economic boom more sustainable than resource development.
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# Other benefits of education

- Better health
  - Longer lifespan
  - Greater self-esteem
  
  - Greater contribution to society
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# Opportunity for Positive Change

- The Brown Baby Boom presents an opportunity to change dramatically the overall well-being of Aboriginals by ensuring that Aboriginal youth who constitute the majority of the population get a ‘good’ education that respects who they are.
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# What are the reasons for the lower educational attainment in the Aboriginal population?

- Stacks and stacks and stacks of reports
  - Perceived deficits in the students
  - Inadequate schools, libraries, ...
  - Inappropriate curriculum
  - Inadequate educational structures
  - Less funding for on-reserve education
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# Reserve schools receive less funding per student

- Avg funding/student **on-reserve** = \$5,500-\$7,500.
  - Avg funding/student **off-reserve** = \$6,800-\$8,400.
  - in AB, SK, MN,  
the funding gaps = \$3,000 - \$5,000.
  - This is tantamount to discrimination on the basis of race.
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# **Education is a treaty right but PSE funding is inadequate**

- Funding has been capped at a 2% increase since 1996, despite increases in the FN population and increased educational costs for PSE.
  - About 11,000 FN students could not get funding from 2001-2006, and 3,000 for 2007-2008.
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- Does this contribute to a feeling of futility for Aboriginal students?
  - Why bother graduating from high school, if you can't get funded to go on to PSE for further training?
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# What can be done to close the education gaps

- Include Aboriginal content in the curriculum
  - Eliminate the 2% cap on FN funding
  - Equalize the funding for on-reserve schools
  - Create an Aboriginal youth employment program – eg., summer jobs, co-op pgms
  - MOU, bi- and tripartite education agreements
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# Recent activities

- The Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples undertook a study of K-12 FN education from April 2010 until Dec 2011.
  - Witnesses came to Ottawa.
  - The committee went to various places to hold public hearings and do fact finding.
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# Members of the APC visiting Onion Lake FN schools




# Visiting Mount Royal Collegiate




# Visiting schools in N.S.





Two major reports on how to improve  
FN educational outcomes at the K-12  
levels (how to close the gaps)


- 1. Senate report, Dec 2011
  - 2. National Panel report, Feb 2012
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# Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples,

December, 2011

## *“Reforming First Nations Education: From Crisis to Hope”*


- **1. Co-develop a First Nations Education Act**
    - Opt-in legislation, replacing IA provisions
    - establish First Nations controlled second-and-third level education structures;
  
  - **2. Statutory Funding for the FN Education Act**
    - To provide stable, predictable funding
    - developed in consultation with First Nations
    - The way to solve funding inequities on-reserve
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● **3. Develop a Canada-FN Action Plan for ed reform**

- within agreed-upon timelines.

● **4. Task force to oversee and monitor progress**

- Report annually, for the next 5 years to the Minister of AANDC and National Chief of AFN
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# National Panel on First Nations Education



February 2012

*“Nurturing the Learning Spirit of First Nation Students”*

- 1. Co-Create a Child-Centered FN Education Act.
- 2. Create a National Commission for FN Education to support education reform and improvement.
- 3. Create a FN education system
  - Regional First Nation Education Organizations (FNEO) to provide support and services for First Nation schools and First Nation Students

Recommendations 1 and 2 must occur together and within 18 months of the release of the report






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- **4. Ensure adequate funding to support a FN education system**
  - **5. Establish an accountability and reporting framework to assess improvement in First Nation Education**
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# **My story: from Pauper to Pharmaceutical Priestess to Parliamentarian**


- Despite the odds (the obstacles):
    - being ashamed of being Indian
    - being picked on as a Chinese girl
    - moving from small town to small town
    - in rural SK and AB
    - being poor, being shy
    - mother died when I was in gr 5.
    - father died when I was in gr 12.
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- What was most helpful: after grade 9:
    - attended 1 high school
    - an excellent high school
    - mostly excellent teachers
    - a brainiac (native intelligence)
    - the right time (Civil rights era, everyone encouraged to attend university, low tuitions)
    - naiveté – not discouraged by the odds!
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- Good teachers are one of the key ingredients in student success.
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## Teachers: can be mean

- Grade 4, Mrs. Robson – chocolate bars for me, but ... not for WQ.
  - Grade 8, the strap was still in use, and I was asked to play the negro maid in the school play.
  - Grade 9, Mrs. Metcalfe
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# Teachers: can be great


- I owe so much to the many great teachers I had at SCCI.
  - For eg., my biology teacher who lent me \$75, at the end of my 1<sup>st</sup> yr at UofS.
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# Special Thanks to Mr. John Dyer, 1963


Vice-Principal and Chemistry teacher, SCCI




**Mr. J. A. Dyer, B.A., B.Ed.**  
Vice-Principal



Whenever I ask someone how they became inspired to go on to university or got into their particular career, they always say it was a teacher or a professor who took an interest in them and encouraged them.



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- As teachers, you have my admiration and gratitude for the difference you make in the lives of your students.
  - Meegwitch, Xie Xie, Merci, Thank You
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