INDIGENOUS NURSING STUDENT AND FACULTY SURVEY REPORT

2023–2024

**Registered Nurse Workforce,
Canadian Production:
Potential New Supply**

January 2026

CANADIAN INDIGENOUS NURSES ASSOCIATION

CASN
ACESI

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Acknowledgements

The Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) and the Canadian Indigenous Nurses Association (CINA) gratefully acknowledge the expertise, time, and contributions of all those who engaged in the development of the Indigenous Nursing Student and Faculty Survey. We would especially like to thank the members of the advisory committee for their commitment and guidance through this process.

Introduction

In December 2020, the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN), in partnership with the Canadian Indigenous Nurses Association (CINA), was funded by Indigenous Services Canada to prepare and launch an annual survey to monitor progress among Canadian schools of nursing on the number of self-identified Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) nursing faculty employed in Canada and on the enrolment of self-identified Indigenous nursing students.

The survey was administered as an adjunct to CASN's annual National Student and Faculty Survey, which provides the nursing community, employers, and other key stakeholders with up-to-date information about the numbers of future nurses and their educators. This survey, first offered by the Canadian Nurses Association and then managed by CASN starting in 2007, has been used to collect data since 1963. The purpose of the survey is to create a mechanism to collect and disseminate high-quality, longitudinal evidence that will allow the recruitment and retention of Indigenous nursing students and faculty to be assessed and monitored across the country.

Background

The *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report* (2015) calls on Canadian institutions and all levels of government to take action to address the legacy of residential schools and advance reconciliation. Call to Action 23 calls for an increase in the number of Indigenous health professionals. Nurses represent the largest health profession in all jurisdictions in Canada. Indigenous Peoples, however, are underrepresented in nursing services and nursing education. These actions are inextricably linked as increasing the number of Indigenous health professionals requires fundamental changes to the education system.

In 2017, "CASN member schools … adopted a motion to respond to the Calls to Action in nursing education" (CASN, 2020). This prompted the creation of a joint CASN–CINA task force that aimed to support the responsiveness of nurse educators to the TRC Calls to Action. As the national voice for nursing education and an organization that sets standards of best practices for education, CASN's role was to provide detailed guidance on practical steps every school of nursing could take. In 2020, CASN published the *Framework of Strategies for Nursing Education to Respond to the Calls to Action*.

While CASN's framework spotlights strategies for schools of nursing to grow the number of Indigenous students in their programs and support their retention, CASN, CINA, governments, and other key stakeholders lack systematically collected data to assess whether progress is being made in increasing the number of Indigenous nurses and nursing faculty. In 2020, CASN and CINA submitted a proposal to Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) with the aim of creating an adjunct survey to its annual student and faculty survey that would collect data on the number of Indigenous students entering and graduating from nursing programs at baccalaureate and graduate levels, as well as data on the number of Indigenous nursing faculty. Further information about the development of the survey can be found in the first Indigenous Nursing Student and Faculty Survey Report, published in 2022 (CINA & CASN, 2022).

Data Collection, Sharing, and Ownership

The principle of Indigenous data sovereignty, which recognizes the authority of Indigenous Peoples over the collection and use of their data and knowledge (Walter et al., 2021), was used to guide the survey development and administration. CINA, CASN and the advisory committee co-developed the survey questions.

CASN collected the data from schools of nursing given that an annual student and faculty survey was already in place. A data sharing agreement between CASN and CINA was signed detailing the partnership: CASN collects and stores the data on its secure server and shares the aggregate data in response to the Indigenous survey questions with CINA. The data is owned by CINA, and CASN is not permitted to report on the Indigenous student and faculty survey responses without express permission from CINA.

Implementation

The Indigenous nursing student and faculty survey is administered alongside CASN's annual national student and faculty survey. A separate, adjunct survey with the Indigenous nursing student and faculty questions was developed in 2021. The survey is administered online using Qualtrics.

For the 2020–2021 survey year, the survey was issued to all 137 schools of nursing in Canada offering entry-to-practice (ETP) pre-licensure education (entitling successful graduates to apply for initial licensure/registration as an RN), post-RN licensure baccalaureate programs, NP education, and/or graduate RN education. The survey was open from January 2022 to September 2022.

For the 2021–2022 survey year, the survey was issued to all 137 schools of nursing in Canada offering entry-to-practice (ETP) pre-licensure education (entitling successful graduates to apply for initial licensure/registration as an RN), post-RN licensure baccalaureate programs, NP education, and/or graduate RN education. The survey was open from January 2023 to September 2023.

For the 2022–2023 survey year, the survey was issued to all 137 schools of nursing in Canada offering entry-to-practice (ETP) pre-licensure education (entitling successful graduates to apply for initial licensure/registration as an RN), post-RN licensure baccalaureate programs, NP education, and/or graduate RN education. The survey was open from January 2023 to September 2023.

For the 2023–2024 survey year, the survey was issued to all 144 schools of nursing in Canada offering entry-to-practice (ETP) pre-licensure education (entitling successful graduates to apply for initial licensure/registration as an RN), post-RN licensure baccalaureate programs, NP education, and/or graduate RN education. The survey was open from January 2024 to September 2024.

2023–2024 Indigenous Nursing Student and Faculty Survey Findings

In total, 94 of the 144 schools completed the survey, including 81 of a possible 92 CASN members. Of the 94 schools, 10 were CÉGEPs. Given the low participation by CÉGEPS, CINA and CASN have not included that data in this report. Response rates are thus calculated based on the 100 schools of nursing that offer baccalaureate and graduate programs.

To maintain privacy, the data for provinces and territories with only one school of nursing located there have been filtered out of the graphs below.

## Indigenous Student Admissions, Enrolment, and Graduate Data by Program

This section of the report presents the admission, enrolment, and graduation data for Indigenous nursing students by program type. Overall admission, enrolment, and graduation data for all nursing students by program type can be found in CASN's 2023–2024 Report *Registered Nurses Education in Canada Statistics*. **Only students that have self-identified as Indigenous to the schools of nursing are included in this report.** Due to variability in whether students choose to self-identify as Indigenous, the results presented in this report do not accurately reflect the total number of Indigenous students in nursing programs.

Admission and enrolment data are reported by academic year (September 2023–August 2024). Graduate data are reported by calendar year (January–December 2024).

Baccalaureate Programs

The response rate from schools regarding 2023–2024 baccalaureate program admissions, enrolment, and graduate data for self-declared Indigenous students ranged from 62% to 67%.

The total number of self-declared Indigenous students admitted to a baccalaureate program in Canada was 348. The total number of students enrolled was 1,001. The total number of graduates was 233.


Baccalaureate Programs
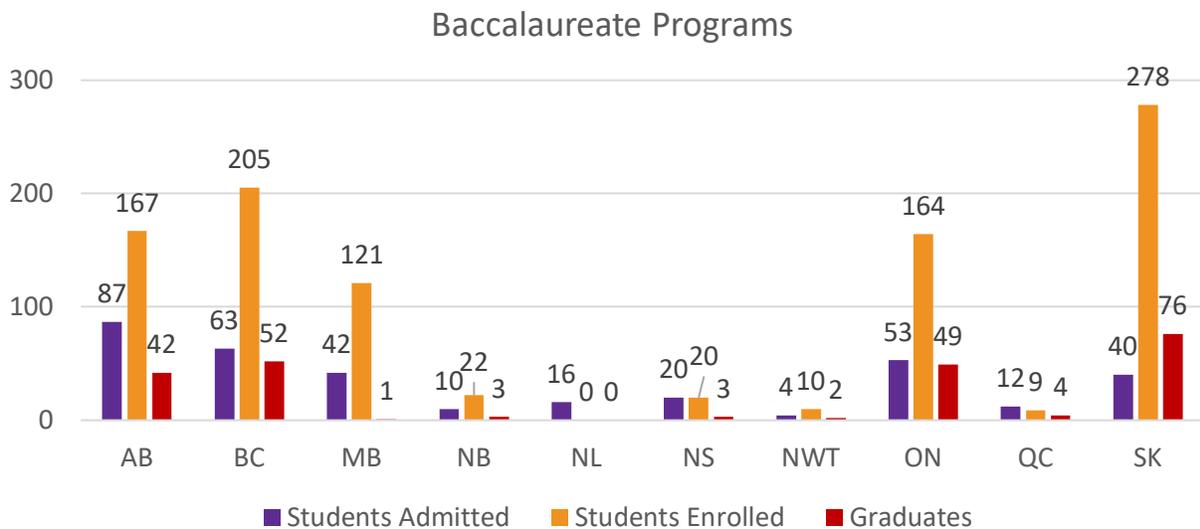
Post-RN Licensure Baccalaureate Programs

The total number of self-declared Indigenous students admitted to a baccalaureate program for diploma-trained registered nurses in Canada was 20. The total number of students enrolled was 104. The total number of graduates was 16. The response rate for these questions was 90.1%.

Nurse Practitioner (NP) Programs

The response rate from schools regarding 2023–2024 NP program admissions, enrolment, and graduate data for self-declared Indigenous students was 84.4%.

The total number of self-declared Indigenous students admitted to an NP program in Canada was 32. The total number of students enrolled was 78. The total number of graduates was 22.
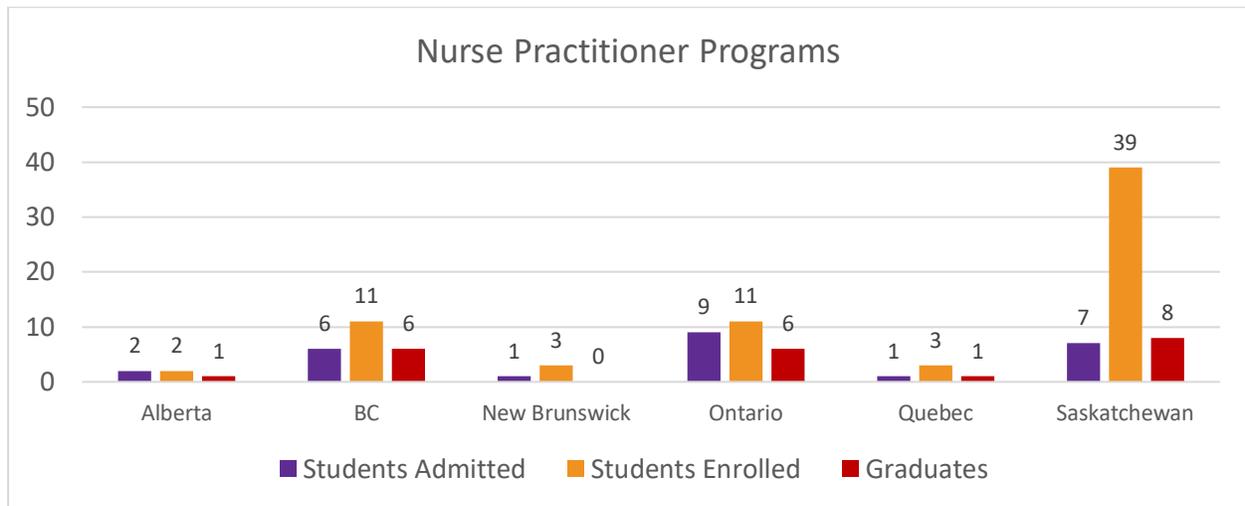
Master's Programs

The response rate from schools regarding 2023–2024 master's program admissions, enrolment, and graduate data for self-declared Indigenous students was 81.6%.
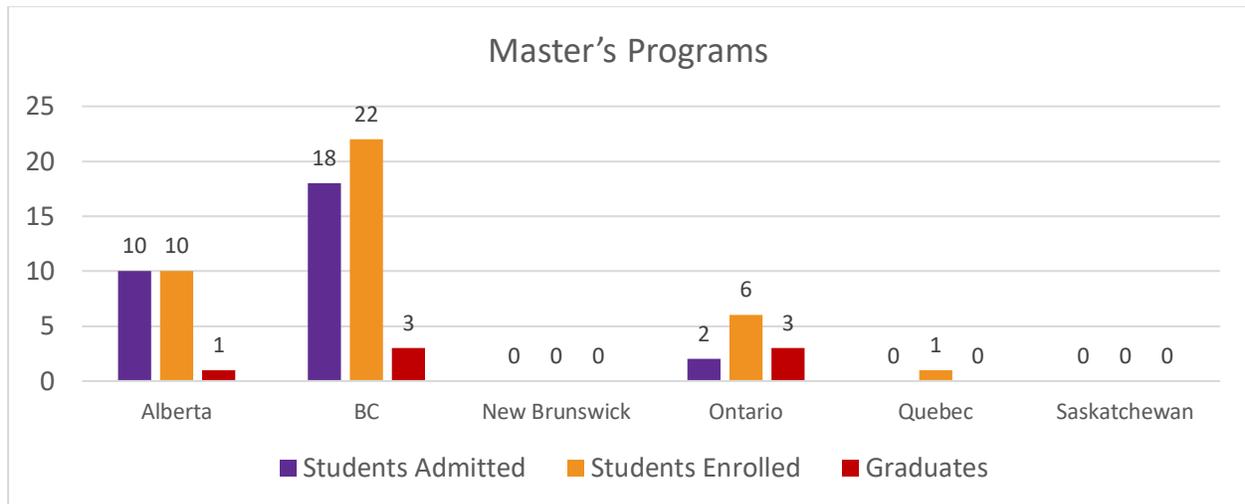
The total number of self-declared Indigenous students admitted to a master's program in Canada was 32. The total number of students enrolled was 43. The total number of graduates was 9.

Doctoral Programs

The response rate from schools regarding 2023–2024 doctoral programs (including PhD and Doctor of Nursing programs) admissions, enrolment, and graduate data for self-declared Indigenous students was 90.9%.

The total number of self-declared Indigenous students admitted to a doctoral program in Canada was 2. The total number of students enrolled was 10. The total number of graduates was 1.
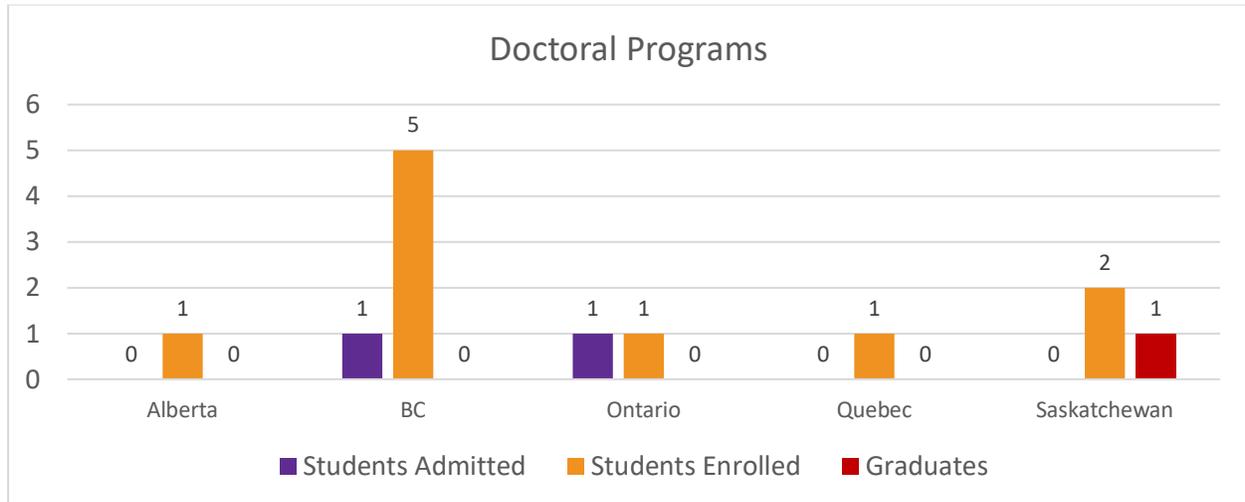
Methods for Determining the Number of Indigenous Nursing Students

Schools were asked to provide details on how they determined the number of Indigenous nursing students in their program(s). The response rate for this question was 76%. A total of 14% indicated that they do not collect this data. The remaining schools indicated that they determined this number using a combination of the number of filled designated seats, and students that have self-declared on school of nursing or institution paperwork.
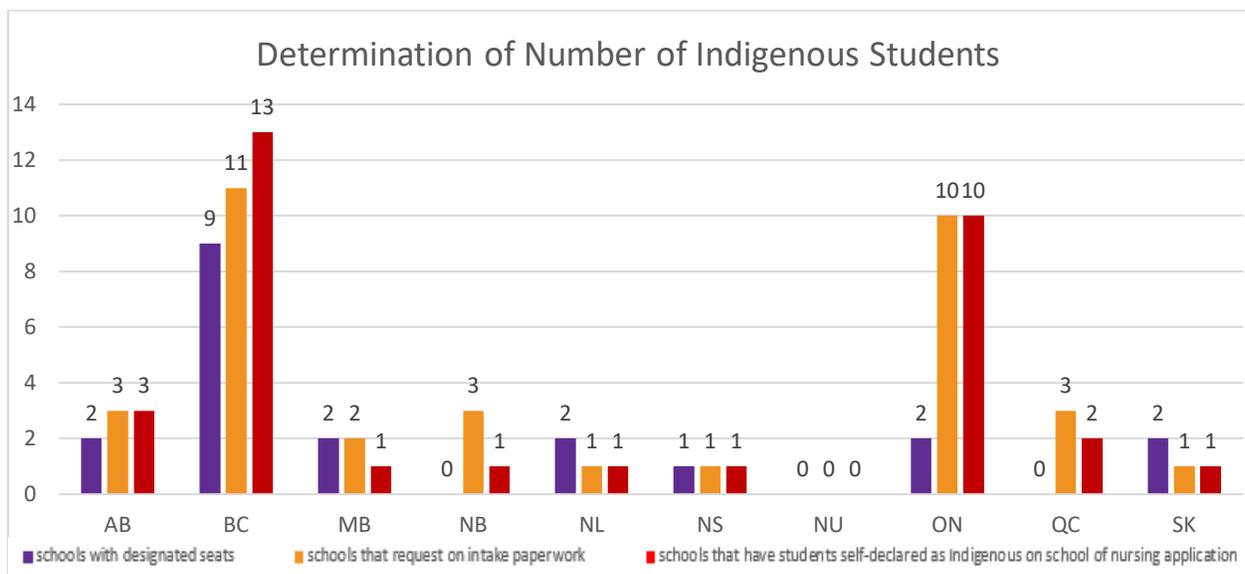
Number of Indigenous Nursing Faculty, 2024

Nursing faculty encompasses different types of nursing educators. For the purposes of this report:

- "Permanent faculty" refers to permanent full-time or part-time faculty who teach nursing courses.
- "Long-term contract faculty" refers to faculty who hold contracts of one academic year or longer who teach nursing courses.
- "Short-term contract faculty" refers to faculty who hold contracts of less than one academic year who teach nursing courses.
- "RN faculty" and "faculty" refer to all of the above.

Number of Indigenous Faculty by Employment Status, 2024

Faculty category	Total number of faculty	# of reported Indigenous faculty	% of faculty workforce reporting as Indigenous
Permanent faculty	3,003	68	2.3
Long-term contract faculty	656	20	3.0
Short-term contract faculty	6,594	41	0.6

Recruitment and Retention of Indigenous Nursing Students and Faculty

Schools of nursing were asked three questions regarding the recruitment and retention of Indigenous students and faculty. Schools were provided a variety of options and could indicate all strategies used by the school, in addition to being able to submit strategies not listed. Respondents were also given the option to indicate "none of the above."

Respondents were asked about the structures and policies their school has in place to support Indigenous student and faculty recruitment and retention. The majority of schools, 76% (*n* = 76), responded to the question, while 7% reported they did not have any policies and structures in place. The remaining respondents reported having multiple structures and policies in place. Strategies used most frequently by the respondents included a committee focused on increasing recruitment and retention and a school policy on anti-racism, diversity, and equity.

When asked about the strategies and supports the nursing program uses to increase the retention of Indigenous nursing students, 76% (*n* = 76) responded. The most common strategies and supports offered by schools include scholarships, bursaries, and financial support to Indigenous students (52 schools); peer support programs (37 schools); and an Indigenous students' association or group (38 schools). Nineteen schools responded using "other" strategies. A total of 7% of respondents reported having no strategies or supports in place to increase retention.

With regards to supporting the recruitment and retention of Indigenous faculty, 71% (*n* = 71) of schools responded. A total of 21% (*n* = 21) reported having no strategies in place. The inclusion

of Elders and community members in providing curricula input and support for using an Indigenous pedagogy were mostly commonly selected by respondents.

Discussion

The findings from the 2023–2024 Indigenous nursing student and faculty (INSF) survey are in-line with the themes identified by both the faculty/administrator and student focus groups during the exploratory phase of the project (CINA & CASN, 2022). While ongoing data collection is required to identify trends, it is clear that there is a lack of accurate student data. Due to the variation in how schools collect enrolment data (and some not collecting it at all), it is difficult to ascertain the true number of Indigenous students that are admitted, enrolled, and graduate from various nursing programs. Self-identification as an Indigenous student does not consistently happen and therefore, is a barrier to accurate enrolment numbers. Similar findings are seen regarding reported faculty numbers. Many current and potential Indigenous faculty members choose not to self-identify, thereby impacting the accuracy of the data. Recruitment and retention strategies for students and faculty need to be culturally safe, and they require the acknowledgment and incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into the school community, student resources, and curricula.

As the INSF survey continues to be offered, it is hoped that the data collected will become more robust so that trends in Indigenous student admissions, enrolment, and graduates as well as Indigenous faculty numbers can be identified and utilized to influence policy to successfully meet the TRC Call to Action 23. However, statistics related to Indigenous student enrolment and numbers of Indigenous faculty should not be considered without context. On its own, this data does not indicate the experience of Indigenous individuals in their schools of nursing. While it is of the utmost importance for the number of Indigenous students and faculty to increase, it is essential that schools ensure that the experience is positive. Research to support the development of such strategies should be an urgent priority for nursing scholars and schools of nursing.

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