



Indigenous Post-Secondary Mental Health Needs Assessment

The primary objective of this project was to conduct a needs assessment (November 2022-January 2023) to identify existing gaps in supporting Indigenous post-secondary student mental health and well-being across Ontario. We hoped to understand better how to improve mental health services for Indigenous students from both a student and staff perspective.

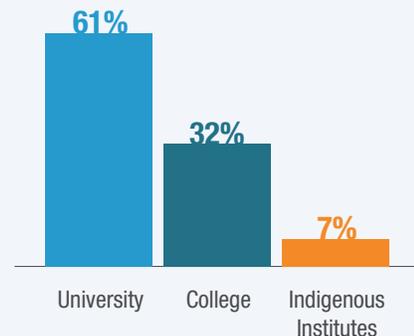
Survey Results:

In total, we had



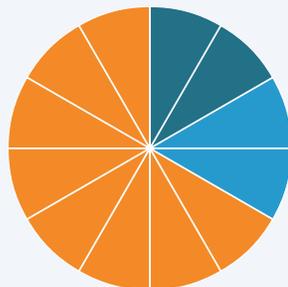
147 Indigenous students and **51 Indigenous staff** (majority were frontline staff including counsellors and psychotherapists) from across Ontario participate in the survey.

Number of Responses by Institution:



Sharing Circle:

A sharing circle was held in-person at the Cambrian College E-Dome on March 21, 2023. There were a total of **8 Indigenous students**, **2 Indigenous staff**, and **2 non-Indigenous staff** in attendance.

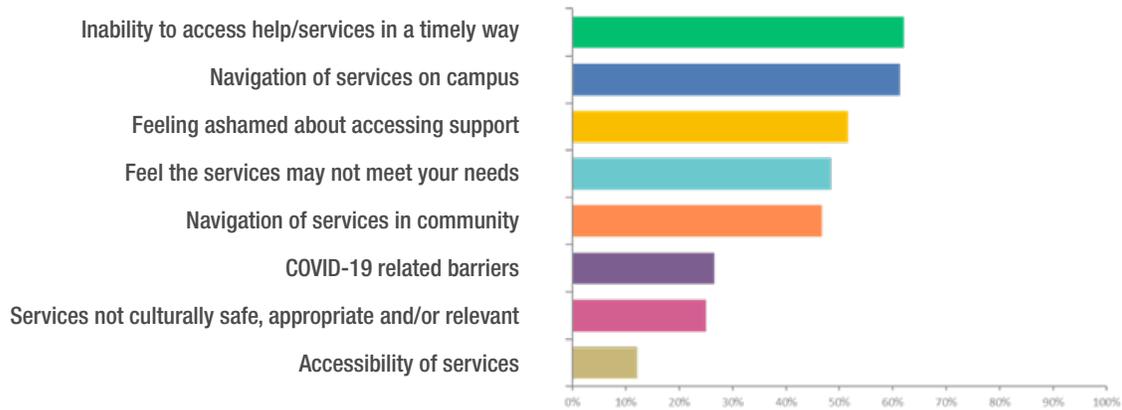


Indigenous Students & Mental Health on Campus:

Of the 147 Indigenous student responses:

- 47%** of respondents stated their mental health impacted their ability to continue their studies
- 69%** of respondents stated they did not access mental health services on campus
- 26%** of respondents **did** experience stigma when accessing mental health services on campus

Barriers faced by Indigenous Students

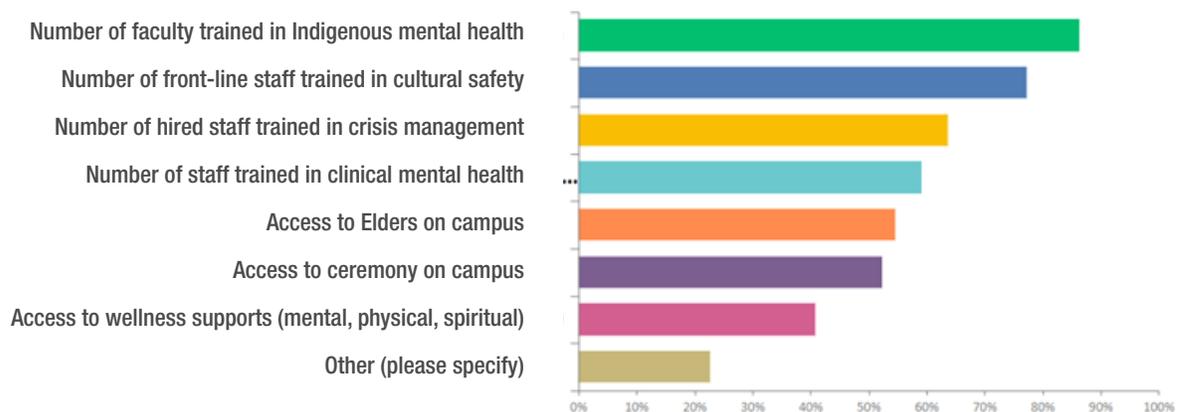


Indigenous Staff

Of the 51 Indigenous staff responses:

- 64%** of respondents experienced compassion fatigue/empathic strain exhaustion - to learn more about empathic strain please review our [empathetic strain infosheet](#)
- 29%** of respondents shared that they took on mental health support duties for which they were not sufficiently trained (providing support to a student in crisis, counselling, and providing support/allyship to coworkers)
- 75%** of respondents saw an increase in the number of Indigenous students seeking mental health supports
- 82%** of respondents saw an increase in complexity of issues faced by Indigenous students

Barriers to Providing Support to Indigenous Students



Other Barriers:

- Challenges with hiring qualified Indigenous staff
- Limited funding

Recommendations:

Indigenous students identified the following recommendations for improved services:

- Increased access to culturally safe supports and activities around campus-Elders, medicine people, and mental health counsellors
- More culturally safe supports such as sharing circles, ceremony, smudging, and land-based activities
- The need for improved accessibility of services on campus (such as more availability/flexibility of service hours to accommodate student life/course schedules)
- Improved navigation of mental health services on campus (most students were not aware of services or where they were located on campus)

Indigenous staff also provided a list of recommendations:

- Increased training for all staff on campus (mandatory cultural safety training and mental health experiences amongst Indigenous communities)
- More professional development days (crisis management, micro-aggression in the workplace, work life balance strategies, and lateral/cultural violence in the workplace)
 - » **Lateral violence** is a term that refers to displaced violence; that is, anger directed towards members within one's own marginalized or oppressed community rather than towards the factors contributing to the anger.

To learn more about the Indigenous needs assessment findings, please watch the recorded webinar [Evaluating Indigenous Needs on Ontario Post-Secondary Campuses](#)

If you have any questions, please contact Megan VanEvery, Indigenous Post-Secondary Knowledge & Research Lead Mvanevery@campusmentalhealth.ca

Acknowledgement:

CICMH would like to say thank you and nia:wen to our stakeholders who worked closely with us in the delivery of our needs assessment. Special mentions to our Indigenous Advisory board, Dr. Deb Chiodo, and Ron Sarazin and Seija Korpela from Cambrian College for their tremendous support and guidance in overseeing the development and distribution of our needs assessment.

“Further learning”: Cultural Safety Training

As expressed by Indigenous staff for required cultural safety training of all staff on campus, we have collated a few online courses and training programs for you to review.

- [Indigenous Relationship and Cultural Awareness Courses](#) - Cancer Care Ontario (free access)
- [Foundations of Indigenous Cultural Safety](#) - Indigenous Primary Health Care Council
- [Indigenous Healthcare Education and Practice: Apply Digital Teaching and Learning Resources to the TRC's Calls to Action](#) - Queen's University (free access)
- [San'yas Anti-Racism Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Program](#) - San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Program

Spotlight Interview with Ron Sarazin at Cambrian College

To learn how the information from the needs assessment can be used on campus, we spoke with Ron Sarazin from Cambrian College and here is what he had to share:

Megan, one of the new initiatives here at Cambrian is the Breakfast Homework Club. It encourages students to attend as a group and work on homework and assignments while having access to tutors and staff while enjoying breakfast. This encourages teamwork and social connection with both students and faculty. This truly is a Wellness event that promotes academic support and nutrition.

Our Elders Corner is a Zoom platform that enable both students and staff to listen to teachings on Cultural Wellness and Connection. Students are encouraged to participate and set appointments with our Elders for one-on-one consultations.

We also utilize our Sacred Arbor and Cultural room to connect with students who are struggling academically and socially to attending post-secondary institutions and are away from home. Students from remote communities find this service valuable as the Elders can relate to struggles and issues pertaining to remote communities.

Ron Sarazin

Director, Indigenous Student Success & Services
Wabnode, Cambrian College

Additional Resources:

Webinars:

[Just Get Over it: An Indigenous-led Approach to Learning about Colonialism](#)

[Indigenizing Mental Health Care Within the Post-Secondary Setting](#)

[Feeling Welcomed: Creating Space for Indigenous Students at the University of Guelph](#)

Podcast:

[Episode 12 – Connecting with Indigenous Students and Staff on Campus with Megan VanEvery and Katy Rankin](#)

Infosheets:

[CICMH Rest and Sleep](#)

[CICMH Stress and Anxiety](#)

[CICMH Test and Exam Anxiety](#)

Additional resources can be found on our website

[Home - Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health](#)