Best Practices in Enhancing Aboriginal Participation in Post-Secondary Education: Canadian & International Perspectives

Research Objectives

❏ **To define national and international trends with respect to Aboriginal participation in post-secondary education programs**

❏ **To identify barriers faced by Aboriginals in accessing post-secondary education**

❏ **To identify "best practices" in terms of policies/programs and initiatives that have encouraged Aboriginal post-secondary education participation**

❏ **To assess gaps and shortcomings**

Research Methods

❑ **Research methodology for the project involved:**

➢ **Literature review on Aboriginal post-secondary education in Canada and in Australia, the United States and New Zealand**

➢ **Interviews with over 50 stakeholders from the area, from provincial government to Aboriginal academic advisors**

➢ **Site visits at major educational institutions in BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan**
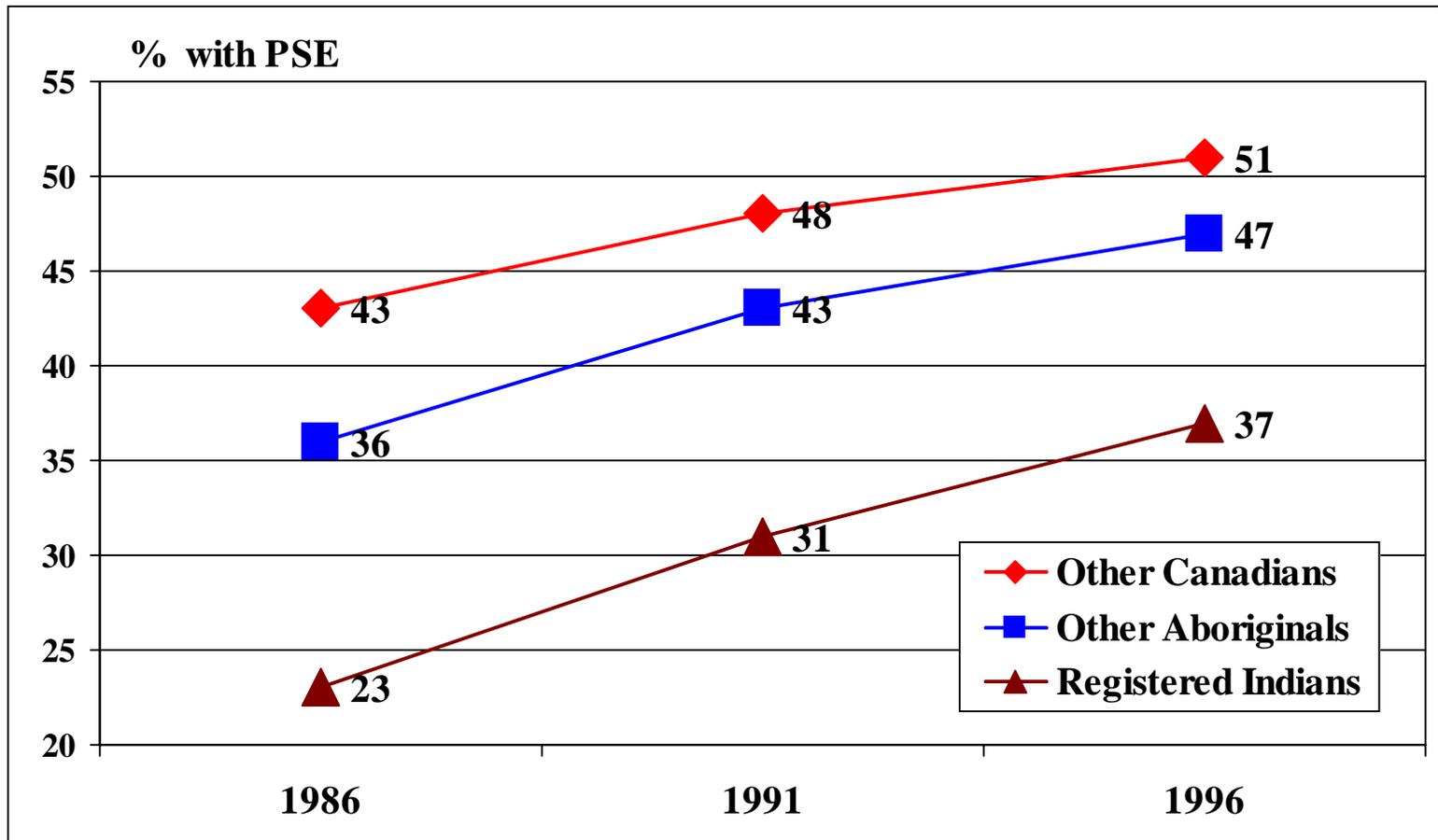
Methodological Issues

❑ **Full analysis of best practices for Aboriginal education rates at the post-secondary level is complicated by:**

➢ **Incomplete data collected at the program and institutional level**

➢ **Students self-identify Aboriginal ancestry**

➢ **Canada Census not seen as reliable by Aboriginal stakeholders due to incomplete data collected and distrust/indifference of Aboriginal people to the Census generally**
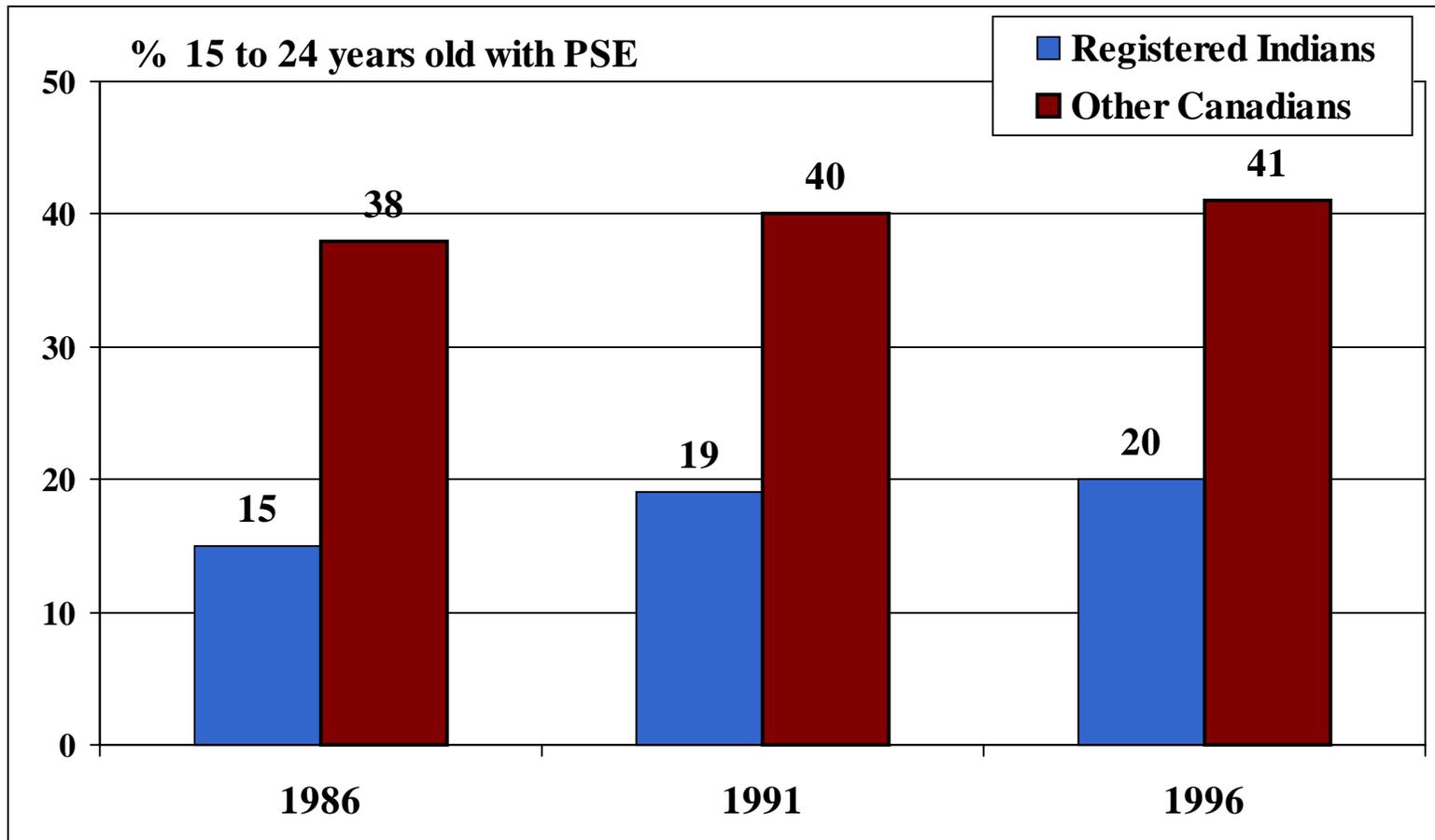
While Aboriginal PSE Participation Rates Have Improved, They Remain Below That of the General Population

% with PSE

Source: Census

"Young Aboriginal" Participation Rates are Half That of the National Average

% 15 to 24 years old with PSE

Legend:
- ■ Registered Indians
- ■ Other Canadians

Year	Registered Indians	Other Canadians
1986	15	38
1991	19	40
1996	20	41

Source: Census

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General Findings in Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education

❏ **The rate of attrition/drop-out is high for Aboriginal students**

❏ **Aboriginal university rates are very low, and for some subjects (i.e., sciences and math) are extremely low**

❏ **Aboriginal distribution of degrees, diplomas and certifications is disproportionately concentrated around education and social sciences**

❏ **International findings are similar, with overall rates of education for Aboriginal people rising, but not to representative levels**

Barriers to Post-Secondary Education for Aboriginal People

❑ **Aboriginal people face financial and non-financial barriers to post-secondary education, including:**

➢ **Historically determined <u>distrust of education institutions</u> (legacy of residential schools and assimilative practices of education)**

➢ **<u>Lack of preparation at the secondary level</u> (due to weak performance, high drop-out rates and limited funding of reserve and remote schools)**

➢ **<u>Poverty </u> of Aboriginal communities**

➢ **Feelings of <u>social discrimination</u> at mainstream institutions, in mainstream society**

➢ **<u>Family and community ties</u> and obligations make the relocation (that is often necessary) difficult and expensive for Aboriginal people**

Existing Initiatives and Programs

❏ Government has recognized the <u>need for initiatives and programs</u> beyond the funding offered through bands by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

❏ <u>Provincial government strategies</u>, such as in Alberta and Saskatchewan, are seeking new ways to improve Aboriginal post-secondary rates

❏ Stakeholders said that there was a <u>need for an increased role for the federal government</u>, and for private donors. Private donations in the U.S. have been helpful in providing support for Aboriginal education

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Existing Initiatives and Programs: Financial

❏ **Some examples of financial resources available to Aboriginal students:**

   ➢ **The PSE program of DIAND**

   ➢ **Canada Student Loans**

   ➢ **Canada Study Grants**

   ➢ **Aboriginal Scholarships and Bursaries**

❏ **In Australia: ABSTUDY**

Existing Initiatives: Aboriginal Institutions

❑ **Semi-Independent/Independent Aboriginal institutions include:**
   - ❑ **Gabriel Dumont Institute**
   - ❑ **Saskatchewan Indian Federated College**
   - ❑ **American tribal colleges**
   - ❑ **University of Raukawa, New Zealand**
   - ❑ **Australia's Batchelor College**

❑ **All are successful in increasing Aboriginal rates through an <u>understanding of Aboriginal needs, support, cultural-appropriateness and through the provision of a community</u> of Aboriginal learners and faculty.**

❑ **It is perceived by stakeholders that they suffer from a <u>lack of funding</u>.**

Existing Initiatives: Programs

❑ **Access and transition programs**

❑ **Community delivery** (e.g., the Teacher Education Programs: NITEP at UBC, BUNTEP and Brandon University, SUNTEP and NORTEP in Saskatchewan)

❑ **Aboriginal support** (Elders, Aboriginal spaces like the First Nations House of Learning at UBC)

❑ **Aboriginal-geared programs**: including programs designed for Aboriginal people in Legal studies, Forestry, etc.

❑ **Aboriginal curriculum development**

Factors in Success

- **Community Delivery**: Bridges cultural and financial gaps of attending post-secondary education
- **Access Program**: Succeed in recruiting and supporting remote, Northern and very under-represented Aboriginal groups
- **Partnerships between Aboriginal communities and post-secondary institutions**: Allow more Aboriginal control of education, more interest from Aboriginal communities
- **Success in Aboriginal support**: Support that encompasses pro-active, academic and personal support in a friendly and Aboriginal-controlled environment has been successful (UBC often cited by stakeholders internationally as model)

Problems Encountered

❑ **Lack of support for Aboriginal people who <u>cannot access consistent band funding</u>:**

➤ **Métis people**

➤ **Aboriginal people who are not Status**

➤ **Status Aboriginals without sufficient ties to bands (e.g., "Bill C-31 Indians")**

➤ **Aboriginals who have to interrupt studies or do not meet criteria for continued support from bands**

Problems of Funding for Aboriginal Institutions and Student Support

❏ **Saskatchewan Indian Federated College and other institutions feel they are under-funded**

❏ **Many other Aboriginal programs have to qualify for short-term grants that are insecure and in constant need of renewing. Access funds have been cut, which has hurt the programs**

❏ **Many mainstream institutions say they need further student support: *It is the students that are not receiving support that withdraw from studies***

Lack of Initiatives that Seek to Isolate Social Factors as Barriers

❏ **Aboriginal students need a variety of supports, for example:**

➢ <u>Aboriginal women</u> make up a higher overall part of the Aboriginal post-secondary student body at most institutions, and are often twice as represented in programs. They are more often with children and families to support, and may need daycare, higher supports for livings expenses, etc.

➢ <u>Aboriginal men</u> are especially under-represented at the post-secondary level and may need special supports to help this problem

➢ <u>Mature students</u>: Aboriginal students are more likely to be mature students, and may require special supports and strategies to assist them

Other Issues Facing Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education

❑ **Lack of support for Aboriginal curriculum development**

❑ **Limited assistance in the development of initiatives to help with Aboriginal student expenses such as housing, daycare and relocation from remote communities**

Best Practices in Increasing Aboriginal Participation in Post-Secondary Education - Summary

❏ **There is increasing recognition that Aboriginal students require additional supports to allow them to succeed in existing institutions**
- ❏ **Social**
- ❏ **Financial**
- ❏ **Academic**

❏ **Some recognition of the need to emphasize Aboriginal delivery of education**
- ❏ **Aboriginal PSE institutions**
- ❏ **Rural/community delivery**

❏ **Several existing institutions have explicitly developed programs/services to support Aboriginal students**
- ❏ **UBC's First Nations House of Learning**
- ❏ **Manitoba's Access Program**
- ❏ **Other**