Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT), Saskatchewan

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The Saskatchewan Institute of Technologies (SIIT, formerly the Saskatchewan Indian Community College) was established in 1976 by First Nations leaders. SIIT carries out the vision and responds to the needs of their First Nations communities and citizens in Saskatchewan for high quality post-secondary education that promotes traditional ways of knowing, being, and doing, and supports success for Indigenous learners. SIIT's inclusiveness fosters cultures and recognizes the reconciliation relationship building within our communities, stakeholders, and partners Additionally, SIIT has since evolved to become one of Canada's leading Indigenous post-secondary institutions and is one out of four credited institutions.

The institute focuses on providing pathways of support to students before, during, and after post-secondary programming. While the institute is in the process of renewing its strategic plan, the vision and statement of principles set out in the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan are:

Vision: Through student-focused, market-relevant programs and services in an Indigenous learning environment, we create work-ready achievers and role models who appreciate the value of learning now and in the future.

Statement of Principle: SIIT is committed to maintaining a First Nations focus in all we do to fulfill our vision. SIIT is dedicated to ongoing collaboration with First Nations stakeholders and communities to implement learner-focused strategies that will:

- Increase and strengthen our knowledge and understanding of First Nations adult learners and their learning needs.
- Include distinctive First Nations elements in programs and services.
- Foster the talents and entrepreneurial spirit of students, faculty and staff by embracing innovation and creativity.
- Ensure First Nations representation throughout our faculty and staff.
- Build awareness of SIIT, our work and the value we provide to the province.

SIIT serves all of Saskatchewan. All Treaty areas are represented on its board of governors. The institute serves multiple linguistic groups. Over 75% of its programming is delivered off-campus, with over 35 community learning sites. SIIT also has three campuses (Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert), nine career and trades training centres across Saskatchewan, and two mobile job connection units. Community program sites are flexible from year to year based on community needs.

SIIT also supports its communities through (1) providing JobSeries programs, which are pre-employment and pre-training learning opportunities for those seeking personal skills development, assistance in developing career plans, employment or further education, or work skills enhancement to maintain employment; (2) JobConnections, a career service program that brings job seekers and

employers together; and (3) the Wellness and Community Development Unit, which is mandated to support three First Nations workforces - National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP), Resolution Health Support Workforce (RHSW), and Maternal Child Health Workers (MCH).

SIIT has over 60,000 alumni across all programs; in 2018/19 there were 2352 students enrolled across 147 programs, with 1706 students completing or continuing their program, and in 2019/20 there were 1657 students registered across 99 programs, with 1038 completing or continuing their program (2019-20 Annual Report).

Over 95% of students and 65% of staff are Indigenous. About half of the student population is over 30, and about half of students have family responsibilities that can be intergenerational. Many Indigenous students are drawn to SIIT as they have seen their family and friends succeed at the institute and have trust in an Indigenous-controlled institution.

Programming

The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) passed an Act in 1985 respecting the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and in 2000 the province recognized SIIT's authority to grant certificates, diplomas, and credits in the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies act. SIIT is one of four credit-granting post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan, and the only one that is First Nations governed. SIIT can grant credentials for programs it has built upon a foundation of Indigenous worldviews. Each program has a knowledge keeper as part of its quality assurance process.

SIIT's programming focuses on academic programming, adult basic education, and trades. Its offerings include certificate, diploma, applied certificate, apprenticeship, and non-credit programming (e.g., short-term intensive skills programs) that focus on attachment to the workforce. All programming is designed to meet community needs based on consultation with communities and assessment of labour market requirements to ensure employability. Each component of a program is assessed through a lens of Indigenous ways of knowing and growing, including the embedding of connections to the land. Programs are also approved by the Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board and meet regulatory requirements for practice as applicable (e.g., licensed practical nursing, Technical Safety Authority of Saskatchewan standards, Transport Canada standards of safety and performance for the Aircraft Maintenance Engineering). Graduates of SIIT have footholds in both Indigenous and Western worlds.

Programs are delivered in person, online, and in blended formats.

Table 1. SIIT programs

Program Type	Current Programs (2021-22)
Adult Basic Education	• Adult 10 • Adult 12 • ABE Bridging to Adult 12 Program • Essential Skills for the Workplace • Essential Skills for Indigenous Early Childhood Education
Academic (Certificate and Diploma, Certificate of Achievement)	• Business • Educational Assistant • First Nations Child Care • Health Care Aide • Indigenous Foundations to Business • Indigenous Practical Nursing • IT Support Specialist • Mental Health & Wellness • Orientation to Daycare and HeadStart
Trades & Industrial (Diploma and Apprenticeship Level)	• Aircraft Maintenance Engineering • Carpentry • Electrical Applied Certificate • Power Engineering • Process Operation Technician • Welding
Trades & Industrial (Trades Pathways)	• Auto Body Repair • Automotive Service Technician Preparation • Concrete Forming • Construction Worker Preparation • Heavy Equipment Operator • Guest Services Representative • Mining Industry Pre-Employment Program • Outdoor Power Equipment Repair • Residential Renovation and Construction • Scaffolding • Tri-Trades • Steel Stud and Drywall • Volunteer Firefighting Training
Trades & Industrial (Testing and Certification)	• Boiler Lab Training – 4th Class Power • Canadian Welding Bureau (CWB) Test Preparation • Carpentry Refresher

The Indigenous Practical Nursing program, developed in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Call to Action #23 for increased numbers of Aboriginal professionals working in health care and cultural competency training for all health care professionals, is an example of SIIT's model of program development and delivery. This two-year, full-time diploma program is the first dedicated Indigenous Practical Nursing program in Canada. Students are prepared to become a culturally responsive professional care provider, understanding both Indigenous and Western approaches to health and wellness. Sample courses include Indigenous Personal Development, Indigenous Communications, Nursing Communications, Indigenous Sociology, Anatomy and Physiology, Pharmacology, and Community Care Nursing. Innovative technologies are combined with traditional practices such as harvesting traditional medicines while learning and practicing cultural protocols. Students take part in classroom, technologically enhanced lab (e.g., training through augmented reality), and practicum (e.g., in long-term care facilities and hospitals) activities to provide them with the skills to support the health and well-being of Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. Graduates of this program who also successfully complete the Canadian Practical Nursing Registration Exam are eligible for licensure with the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses.

SIIT has partnerships to build in pathways of study to Western institutions (e.g., University of Saskatchewan, University of Regina, University of Lethbridge). The institute also has partnerships with colleges that purchase SIIT's programs for delivery, such as Northlands College of Canada delivering SIIT's Mental Health and Wellness Program and Parkland College delivering the Continuing Care Assistant Program.

Student Services

Learners are embraced where they are and as a lifelong part of the SIIT family in a Wrap Around Support Model. Students are supported in their pathways from initial contact with SIIT to employment. The institute recruits in many ways, including outreach in First Nations communities, schools, career fairs, and through meetings with Chief and Council. An advisor works individually with each applicant, supporting them with the application (e.g., filling out paperwork, costs for transcripts). Upon admission, students are supported in accessing funding, housing, food, childcare, transportation, and relocation. Near the beginning of the academic year, SIIT support staff connect with students at least every two weeks to ensure students have the supports they need.

When the school year begins, students are informed about all the SIIT services available to them, including Elders and Knowledge Keepers, Cultural Coordinators, academic advisors, academic coaches, learning specialists, community strategist, community student counsellors, and registered psychologist. Students continue to be supported in a model based on the medicine wheel, with their spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental needs nurtured throughout their learning at SIIT in a "multi-layered circle of care". Every two weeks, student support staff meet with instructors to identify students that may be struggling academically, not attending class, or experiencing other challenges. A support plan is developed using a case management approach, including referrals to additional supports such as counsellors, tutors, and learning specialists. Students were also supported through Student Opportunity, Achievement, and Retention (SOAR) program to meet financial needs and urgent basic needs; over 95%

of students supported in this program completed their year of study in 2018/19.

Students are also supported in mapping their pathways to further education or employment. Closer to the end of their learning journey at SIIT, students are connected to job coaches and opportunities to develop their resume and job searching skills.

SIIT incorporated a "Student Hub", digital resource that welcomes faculty, support staff, and learners. The student support hub allows the student to embrace the institutional culture and makes information and services easily accessible within a few clicks. Learners who study online/hybrid delivery do so with assumed flexibility. They need to access to learning resources and services in the same way that they have access to their courses, that is, online and on demand. The Student Support Hub offers engagement and facilitation of support resources in real time and is accessible 24/7.

Growth and Development

SIIT is in the process of renewing its strategic plan, which was paused during the COVID-19 emergency response. It will continue to focus on supporting it students and being accountable and responsive to the community.

To learn more, please visit: www.afn.ca/policy-sectors/education