



# What does it cost to deliver adult education in First Nations?

**AFN Education Forum**

DRAFT – For discussion only

February 20, 2025

## Project purpose and IFSD's mandate

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- **Purpose:** To define approaches for the delivery of adult education on-reserve and to estimate the costs for program delivery (including infrastructure).
- **IFSD's mandate:**
  - 1) Assess required capital needs and current infrastructure gaps for administering adult education on-reserve.
  - 2) Analyze the delivery of adult education in Canada.
  - 3) Develop a costing framework and national cost estimate for a First Nations adult education program on-reserve.

## Progress update

Approach	Progress
Defining adult education	Subject to review
Literature review (adult education in First Nations, Indigenous, and non-Indigenous contexts)	Subject to review
Assessing federal, provincial and territorial approaches to adult education	Subject to review
Federal expenditure data	Progress is slow
Case studies of First Nations and non-Indigenous approaches to adult education	Limited progress; 4 First Nations cases completed (awaiting approval for use); 3 First Nations cases scheduled and/or in-progress  4 non-Indigenous overviews completed and approved for use
Cost estimation and analysis of program design, delivery, and related infrastructure	Indicative costing using non-First Nations data

## Interim draft report takeaways

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- Using provincially derived cost data with adjustments for remoteness:
  - IFSD’s interim national estimates for First Nations adult education range from a low of \$17M (with assumed uptake of 1% of the eligible population) and \$518M (with assumed uptake of 20% of the eligible population) using different base scenarios.
- Cost analysis gap = lack of First Nation data.
- Lack of public reporting by ISC, even on recent budget announcements.
- Opportunity to highlight adult education (in a changing political context) as a tool for economic growth.



# Defining adult education

## Defining adult education

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- For the project, adult education is circumscribed by the definition of the existing federal program (First Nations Adult Education, intended to support secondary school attainment).
- This means that the cost analysis will focus on activities that provide credit toward a high school diploma. The cost analysis will be undertaken on an activity basis, i.e., specific cost categories related to delivering adult education, such as teaching staff, technology, etc.
- This definition of adult education does not include community college and is not meant to replace the activities of community colleges.

## Proposed definition

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- For this project, IFSD proposes adult education be defined as:

*Programming to complete a high school diploma or provide credit toward a high school diploma tailored for individuals 18+ years of age who may already be in the workforce. It provides students with flexible learning options e.g., part-time or distance learning, to meet their goals. Adult education programs aim to equip learners with skills, certifications, and educational experiences to facilitate post-secondary readiness, increased employment opportunities, personal development, and life-long learning.*

## Literature Review – Notable Issues

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- 1) The size and scope of the gaps in First Nations adult education are undefined.
  - Efforts in First Nations often focus on improving foundational skills such as literacy and numeracy.
  - This contrasts with mainstream Canadian programming, which typically emphasizes skills development and training for employment.
  
- 2) There is a lack of consistency in adult education delivery approaches.
  - This field is not uniformly regulated, monitored, delivered, or measured.
  - The localized nature of adult education programs limits the transferability of approaches across regions.
  
- 3) There is no universally agreed upon definition of success for adult education.
  - Different stakeholder types often diverge in how they define success.
  - Furthermore, differences in the specific objectives, structures, and accountabilities of localized programs result in varied definitions of success.



## Provincial/Territorial Comparison

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- Most jurisdictions do not have specific adult education legislation, especially when applying IFSD's project definition. Manitoba and Nova Scotia are notable exceptions.
- There is no single approach or legal framework through which to define the provision of adult education.
- It is delivered, e.g., community organizations, school boards, and funded by provinces and territories but with different approaches and committed resources, e.g., funding supplementary supports and services.
- While there are various approaches to adult education, performance information is limited.
- Adult education is federally funded through provincial departments responsible for education, labour or training.

## Federal expenditures

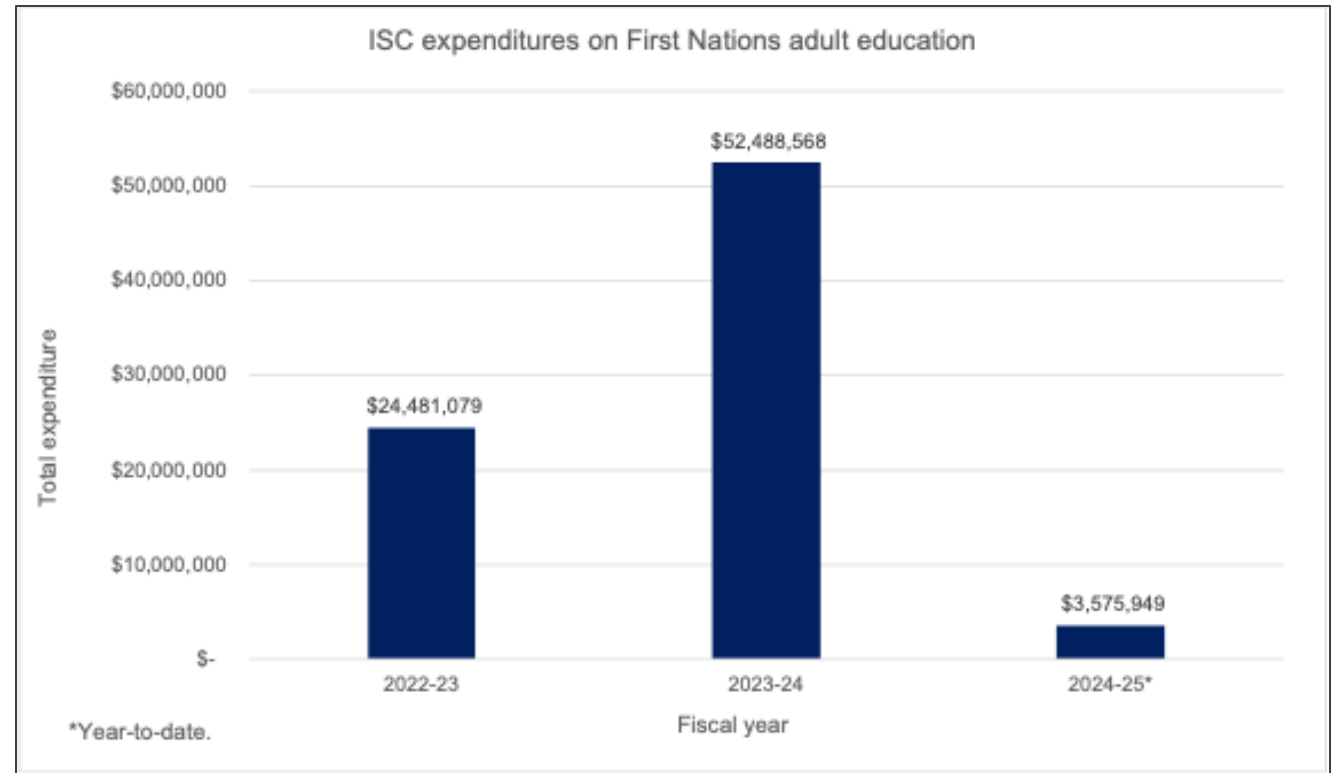
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- ISC does not report publicly on First Nations adult secondary education, nor does ISC track the expenditures in its program architecture.
  - Most expenditures are part of the Elementary and Secondary funding stream.
- Information on federal expenditures in First Nations adult secondary education can be determined through regional formulas (but they are not publicly reported or accessible).
- ISC provided information on First Nations adult secondary education expenditures for implementation and expansion.
  - IFSD assumes but cannot confirm that the expenditures are associated to the Budget 2021 announcement of \$350M over five years for adult education in First Nations.
  - The allocation of the funding was segmented into two streams according to documents provided by AFN: 1) implementation and expansion funding; 2) enrolment-driven instructional funding.
  - How these implementation mechanisms align to the aggregated data provided by ISC is unclear.

## National expenditures – First Nations adult secondary education implementation and expansion

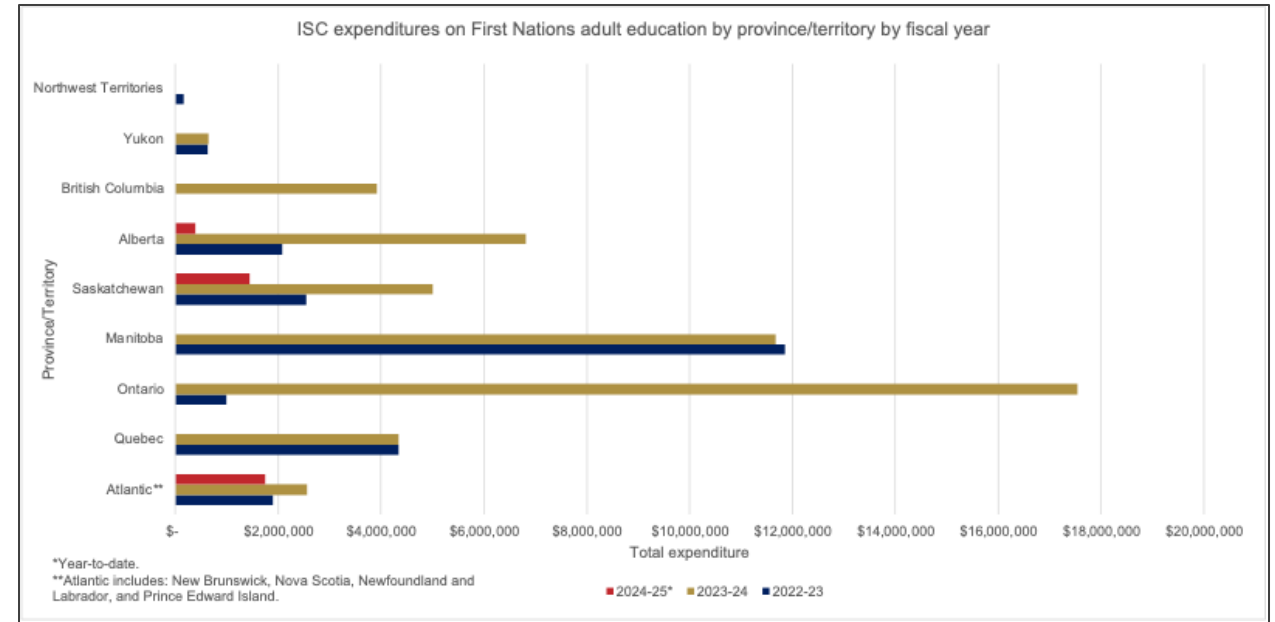
ISC expenditures on First Nations adult education	
Fiscal year	Total expenditure
2022-23	\$ 24,481,079
2023-24	\$ 52,488,568
2024-25*	\$ 3,575,949
*Year-to-date	



# Regional allocations – First Nations adult secondary education implementation and expansion

ISC expenditures on First Nations adult education by province/territory by fiscal year			
Fiscal year	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25*
Province/Territory			
Atlantic**	\$ 1,889,304	\$ 2,565,793	\$ 1,745,241
Quebec	\$ 4,343,965	\$ 4,343,965	N/A
Ontario	\$ 990,000	\$ 17,534,785	N/A
Manitoba	\$ 11,846,459	\$ 11,679,726	N/A
Saskatchewan	\$ 2,542,459	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 1,447,655
Alberta	\$ 2,080,487	\$ 6,810,079	\$ 383,053
British Columbia	N/A	\$ 3,911,882	N/A
Yukon	\$ 625,804	\$ 642,338	N/A
Northwest Territories	\$ 162,601	N/A	N/A

\*Year-to-date  
 \*\*Atlantic includes Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island





## Interim cost analysis

## Notes on cost estimation analysis

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- Cost estimation analysis produces a range of scenarios to assess the costs of an asset, program, or service.
- The adult education cost data used in the estimates come from provincial school boards. While based on activities associated to the delivery of adult education, e.g., teacher salaries and benefits, operating costs, etc., they are **not necessarily indicative of First Nations needs or realities**.
- Provincial data can be used to produce an approximate estimate for the delivery of adult education in First Nations. However, these estimates would be for operating costs, **not start-up, or initial capital costs**.
- Adjustments could be made in modeling, but it is preferable to obtain First Nations-specific data with actual expenditures and associated activities. IFSD considers the cost estimates in this interim draft report illustrative only.

## Notes on cost estimation analysis (cont.)

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- Provincial per capita costs are assumed to operate at a larger scale than in a typical First Nation (owing to catchment size, population density, and uptake rates).
- Additionally, provincial/territorial funding for First Nations adult education is not known by IFSD and may address some funding limitations.

## Information gaps and limitations

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- There remain important information gaps for the cost estimation and analysis of adult education in First Nations:
  - 1) Provincial expenditures in adult education;
  - 2) ISC allocations in adult education by First Nation;
  - 3) Existing services and infrastructure for adult education in each First Nations or groups of First Nations that are pooling resources to deliver adult education, (i.e., IFSD is assuming that all are starting from 0, which is not necessarily the case).



## Per capita costs

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- The per capita costs range from approximately \$6,200 to \$9,500 per learner.
- Activities are generally consistent, with exception to the per learner model averaging all education costs for K-12 students in Ontario.
- Cost variances are assumed to be attributable to differences in teacher salaries, capital, and other operating costs.

Province/ Territory	Adult education description, i.e., what's included in the per capita estimate	Student count	Basis of student count	Per learner cost (2024/25)
<b>Scenario 1: Nova Scotia</b>	1) Primarily in-person courses	200	Full-time and part-time combined; point in time count (Fall)	\$6,476
	2) Grades 11-12	141		\$8,655
<b>Scenario 2: Nova Scotia</b>	3) Four quarters per school year			
	4) 1 principal, 1 administrative assistant, 1 guidance staff/counsellor, 11 teaching staff, and 1 custodian			
<b>Scenario 3: Manitoba</b>	1) Primarily in-person courses	58	Full-time and part-time combined; point in time count (Fall)	\$8,898
	2) Grades 11-12			
	3) 2 semesters per school year			
	4) Kings County Adult High School: 1 principal, 1 administrative assistant, and 3 teaching staff			
	5) Windsor Adult High School: 1 principal, 1 secretary, and 3 teaching staff			
<b>Scenario 4: Ontario</b>	1) In-person and self-directed courses	71	From division community report; no info on nature of count (i.e., full-time, full-time and part-time, etc.)	\$6,287
	2) Grades 10-12			
	3) Childcare on site			
	4) 1 director, 1 administrative assistant, 1 teacher, 2 educational assistants, and a Child Development Centre Coordinator			
<b>Scenario 5: Unit cost of K-12 schools in Ontario</b>	1) In-person and self-directed courses	91	Average daily enrolment (ADE)	\$8,473
	2) High school courses to complete Ontario Secondary School Diploma			
<b>Scenario 5: Unit cost of K-12 schools in Ontario</b>	1) Shares of the following expenditure categories were estimated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Teacher compensation</li> <li>b. Non-teacher instruction</li> <li>c. Pupil accommodation</li> <li>d. Infrastructure cost</li> <li>e. Transportation</li> <li>f. Administration</li> <li>g. Other spending</li> </ul>	Not relevant for per student cost	NA	\$9,550
	2) Assumes the number of students, a student-to-teacher ratio (23), a bench mark compensation per teacher.			
	3) Estimates total teacher compensation.			
	4) Estimates the cost of the other expenditure categories based on their ratio to teacher compensation			
	5) Divides the total cost by the assumed number of students.			



## Assumptions

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- 1) Cost estimates include on-reserve populations only (unless otherwise indicated);
- 2) Inflation is adjusted using CPI;
- 3) Geographic adjustment (by First Nation) is based on the revised ISC Cost Factor Adjustment formula (RQAF) that was included in the Draft Final Agreement for CFS.
- 4) IRS 2023 population data is used;
- 5) Census 2021 rates of secondary and post-secondary school credentials are applied;
- 6) Eligible population for adult education, i.e., secondary credentialing, is assumed to be 1%, 5%, 10%, 20% of the total 16+ population residing on-reserve without a high school diploma. Demand for adult education in First Nations is undefined, which is a challenge for cost estimation. IFSD therefore presents five assumed uptake rates;
- 7) Costs for one fiscal year are presented;
- 8) Estimates do not include capital.

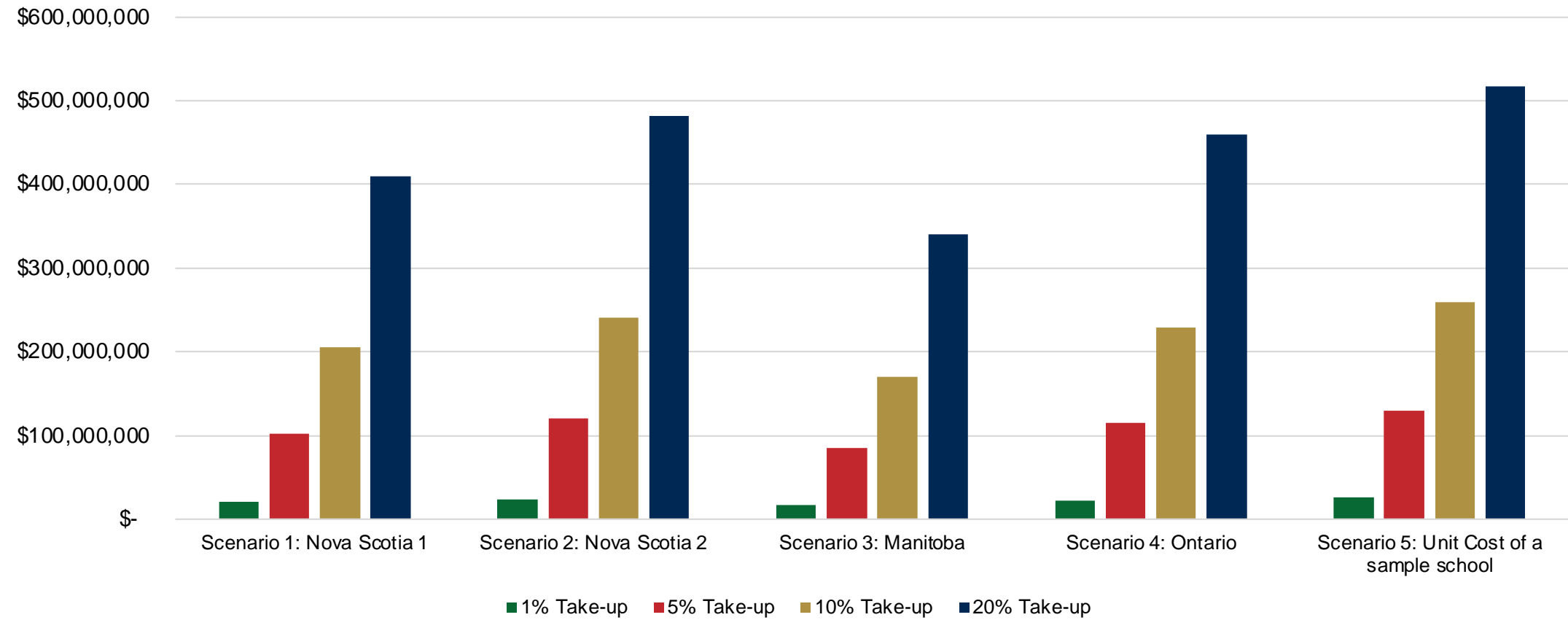
## Regional assumptions

Data and Assumptions							
	Average share of the on-reserve population without a diploma	IRS 2023 on-reserve population, 16+ without a diploma	Population of 1% assumed uptake	Population of 5% assumed uptake	Population of 10% assumed uptake	Population of 20% assumed uptake	Range of Remoteness Adjustment Factor
Newfoundland and Labrador	42%	1,112	11	56	111	222	22%-113%
Prince Edward Island	36%	181	2	9	18	36	21%-24%
Nova Scotia	29%	2,446	24	122	245	489	16%-25%
New Brunswick	32%	2,492	25	125	249	498	17%-25%
Quebec	46%	21,707	217	1,085	2,171	4,341	4%-111%
Ontario	42%	33,501	335	1,675	3,350	6,700	5%-143%
Manitoba	54%	38,119	381	1,906	3,812	7,624	15%-119%
Saskatchewan	49%	28,613	286	1,431	2,861	5,723	16%-115%
Alberta	51%	30,248	302	1,512	3,025	6,050	7%-108%
British Columbia	27%	13,873	139	694	1,387	2,775	7%-113%
Yukon	55%	1,838	18	92	184	368	29%-114%
Northwest Territories	64%	6,745	67	337	675	1,349	24%-111%
Total	N/A	180,874	1,809	9,044	18,088	36,175	N/A

## National cost estimates by assumed take-up rates

	Cost estimates by assumed take-up rates			
	1% Take-up	5% Take-up	10% Take-up	20% Take-up
Scenario 1: Nova Scotia 1	\$ 20,499,231	\$ 102,496,155	\$ 204,992,309	\$ 409,984,618
Scenario 2: Nova Scotia 2	\$ 24,111,323	\$ 120,556,614	\$ 241,113,228	\$ 482,226,455
Scenario 3: Manitoba	\$ 17,036,175	\$ 85,180,876	\$ 170,361,751	\$ 340,723,502
Scenario 4: Ontario	\$ 22,959,681	\$ 114,798,403	\$ 229,596,806	\$ 459,193,611
Scenario 5: Unit Cost of a sample school	\$ 25,878,077	\$ 129,390,387	\$ 258,780,774	\$ 517,561,547

National estimates with alternative take-up rates



## Regional estimates by component (baseline + remoteness)

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- For illustrative purposes, an assumed take-up of 10% of the eligible population is modelled.
- Baseline costs make up most of the estimates, with remoteness representing a substantial but smaller component.

	Cost estimates at 10% assumed uptake				
	Scenario 1: Nova Scotia 1	Scenario 2: Nova Scotia 2	Scenario 3: Manitoba	Scenario 4: Ontario	Scenario 5: Unit Cost of a sample school
Newfoundland	\$ 1,452,194	\$ 1,708,080	\$ 1,206,867	\$ 1,626,496	\$ 1,833,239
Baseline	\$ 880,131	\$ 1,035,216	\$ 731,446	\$ 985,770	\$ 1,111,071
Remoteness	\$ 572,063	\$ 672,864	\$ 475,421	\$ 640,726	\$ 722,168
Prince Edward Island	\$ 168,319	\$ 197,978	\$ 139,884	\$ 188,522	\$ 212,484
Baseline	\$ 137,179	\$ 161,350	\$ 114,004	\$ 153,644	\$ 173,173
Remoteness	\$ 31,140	\$ 36,627	\$ 25,880	\$ 34,878	\$ 39,311
New Brunswick	\$ 2,368,551	\$ 2,785,904	\$ 1,968,417	\$ 2,652,839	\$ 2,990,041
Baseline	\$ 1,947,434	\$ 2,290,584	\$ 1,618,442	\$ 2,181,177	\$ 2,458,426
Remoteness	\$ 421,117	\$ 495,320	\$ 349,975	\$ 471,662	\$ 531,615
Nova Scotia	\$ 2,376,269	\$ 2,794,982	\$ 1,974,832	\$ 2,661,484	\$ 2,999,784
Baseline	\$ 1,948,372	\$ 2,291,687	\$ 1,619,222	\$ 2,182,228	\$ 2,459,610
Remoteness	\$ 427,897	\$ 503,295	\$ 355,610	\$ 479,256	\$ 540,174
Quebec	\$ 22,703,179	\$ 26,703,620	\$ 18,867,797	\$ 25,428,161	\$ 28,660,325
Baseline	\$ 16,814,251	\$ 19,777,026	\$ 13,973,720	\$ 18,832,405	\$ 21,226,186
Remoteness	\$ 5,888,928	\$ 6,926,594	\$ 4,894,077	\$ 6,595,755	\$ 7,434,139
Ontario	\$ 43,012,808	\$ 50,591,932	\$ 35,746,401	\$ 48,175,482	\$ 54,299,050
Baseline	\$ 26,817,367	\$ 31,542,753	\$ 22,286,951	\$ 30,036,160	\$ 33,854,045
Remoteness	\$ 16,195,441	\$ 19,049,178	\$ 13,459,450	\$ 18,139,322	\$ 20,445,005
Manitoba	\$ 44,481,602	\$ 52,319,536	\$ 36,967,063	\$ 49,820,570	\$ 56,153,245
Baseline	\$ 29,247,332	\$ 34,400,894	\$ 24,306,408	\$ 32,757,786	\$ 36,921,616
Remoteness	\$ 15,234,269	\$ 17,918,642	\$ 12,660,655	\$ 17,062,784	\$ 19,231,629
Saskatchewan	\$ 29,711,681	\$ 34,947,064	\$ 24,692,312	\$ 33,277,868	\$ 37,507,806
Baseline	\$ 21,896,624	\$ 25,754,945	\$ 18,197,498	\$ 24,524,797	\$ 27,642,136
Remoteness	\$ 7,815,057	\$ 9,192,119	\$ 6,494,814	\$ 8,753,071	\$ 9,865,670
Alberta	\$ 29,027,445	\$ 34,142,261	\$ 24,123,668	\$ 32,511,506	\$ 36,644,032
Baseline	\$ 22,446,265	\$ 26,401,437	\$ 18,654,285	\$ 25,140,410	\$ 28,335,999
Remoteness	\$ 6,581,180	\$ 7,740,825	\$ 5,469,383	\$ 7,371,096	\$ 8,308,033
British Columbia	\$ 19,079,348	\$ 22,441,247	\$ 15,856,161	\$ 21,369,374	\$ 24,085,627
Baseline	\$ 13,798,935	\$ 16,230,393	\$ 11,467,799	\$ 15,455,172	\$ 17,419,673
Remoteness	\$ 5,280,413	\$ 6,210,855	\$ 4,388,362	\$ 5,914,202	\$ 6,665,954
Yukon	\$ 1,864,304	\$ 2,192,806	\$ 1,549,356	\$ 2,088,070	\$ 2,353,484
Baseline	\$ 1,336,722	\$ 1,572,261	\$ 1,110,902	\$ 1,497,164	\$ 1,687,468
Remoteness	\$ 527,582	\$ 620,545	\$ 438,455	\$ 590,906	\$ 666,016
Northwest Territories	\$ 8,746,611	\$ 10,287,818	\$ 7,268,994	\$ 9,796,435	\$ 11,041,656
Baseline	\$ 5,301,337	\$ 6,235,465	\$ 4,405,751	\$ 5,937,637	\$ 6,692,368
Remoteness	\$ 3,445,274	\$ 4,052,353	\$ 2,863,244	\$ 3,858,798	\$ 4,349,288
TOTAL	\$ 204,992,309	\$ 241,113,228	\$ 170,361,751	\$ 229,596,806	\$ 258,780,774
Total baseline	\$ 142,571,947	\$ 167,694,010	\$ 118,486,429	\$ 159,684,350	\$ 179,981,771
Total Remoteness	\$ 62,420,362	\$ 73,419,217	\$ 51,875,322	\$ 69,912,455	\$ 78,799,003



## Conclusion

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- Adult education is a broad category of activities that support the continued development of learning, skills development, and training.
- Across Canadian provinces and territories, adult education is defined, delivered, and funded differently. First Nations are no exception.
- Using provincially derived cost data with adjustments for remoteness, IFSD's interim national estimates for First Nations adult education range from a low of \$17M (with assumed uptake of 1% of the eligible population) and \$259M (with assumed uptake of 20% of the eligible population) using different base scenarios.
- ISC's current expenditures on First Nations adult secondary education are undefined.

## Get in touch

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