

LIGHTING THE PATH:
2013-2018 STRATEGIC PLAN

FIRST NATIONS
UNIVERSITY
OF CANADA



tradition innovation leadership

INTRODUCTION

Lighting the Path: First Nations University of Canada Strategic Plan 2013-2018 will guide the work of Canada's first university-accredited Indigenous institution of higher learning for the next five years. The approval of this plan comes at a moment of great promise for First Nations University of Canada (FNUUniv), with the University enjoying robust growth and renewal. Substantial progress has been made in the areas of governance and administration. This work will continue throughout the duration of this plan as we continue to strive for excellence.

The plan articulates specific goals related to four strategic themes, identified through extensive community consultation: Indigenous Languages, Cultures and Traditions; Innovative Student Learning Experience; Sustainable Growth; and Enhanced Stakeholder Engagement. These themes are aligned with the University's vision and mission, which speak to the institution's foundational and ongoing mandate to deliver accessible, high quality education while fostering and promoting Indigenous tradition, culture and values. The importance of close connection to Indigenous communities echoes throughout the plan as a key element of FNUUniv's distinctiveness.

At the heart of the plan are FNUUniv's students, who are the focus of all that we do. They embody the dream of the institution's founders that more First Nations people would become empowered through post-secondary education. To enhance that engagement, the institution provides a learning environment in which First Nations students can hear the languages of their peoples spoken, learn from Elders in their classrooms and participate in sacred ceremonies. Every aspect of the FNUUniv experience, from the curriculum to the student support services, is designed to give First Nations, Métis and other Indigenous learners the greatest opportunity to succeed

in their education and, in turn, to strengthen their communities through their accomplishments.

At the same time, FNUUniv opens its doors each year to thousands of students of all backgrounds who wish to learn about Indigenous ways of knowing. The students, faculty and staff at FNUUniv come from many backgrounds, and we work collectively in support of the principle that the advancement of Indigenous peoples yields many positive outcomes, including greater intercultural understanding and reconciliation. The University is committed to the values of inclusivity and respect for people of all cultures.

The need for greater access to culturally supportive post-secondary education for Indigenous students is increasingly urgent, so that they can benefit fully from the treaty right to education and share in the country's prosperity. Through this plan, FNUUniv seeks to meet that growing demand by expanding its reach across Canada, while staying true to its Saskatchewan roots. By striving to enhance its national and international reputation, FNUUniv enacts the vision behind its name change in 2003 from the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College.

In order to achieve this expansion, over the next five years FNUUniv will create strategic partnerships with Indigenous communities, various levels of government, and academic and industry partners across Canada. Strength through collaboration will be a hallmark of FNUUniv's identity.

The implementation of this plan will require the engagement of all of FNUUniv's faculty, staff, student and community partners. By acting on the goals and values articulated in this document, we will secure FNUUniv's long-term sustainability and fulfill the bright vision of our future.

VISION AND MISSION

Vision

We, the First Nations, are children of the Earth, placed here by the Creator to live in harmony with each other, the land, animals and other living beings. All beings are interconnected in the Great Circle of Life.

As First Nations, we treasure our collective values of wisdom, respect, humility, sharing, harmony, beauty, strength and spirituality. We have preserved and passed down our traditions through countless generations.

The Elders teach us to respect the beliefs and values of all nations. Under the Treaties, our leaders bade us to work in cooperation and equal partnership with other nations. The Elders' desire for an Indian institution of higher education led to the establishment of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC).

The First Nations University of Canada provides an opportunity for students of all nations to learn in an environment of First Nations cultures and values. The university is a special place of learning where we recognize the spiritual power of knowledge and where knowledge is respected and promoted. In following the paths given to us by the Creator, the First Nations have a unique vision to contribute to higher education. With the diversity and scope of the First Nations degree programs, the university occupies a unique role in Canadian higher education. The university promotes a high quality of education, research and publication.

At the First Nations University of Canada, First Nations students can learn in the context of their own traditions,

languages and values. Rooted in their own traditions, our students will walk proudly and wisely today. The university, through extension programming, reaches out and welcomes First Nations peoples to use its resources for the enrichment of their communities.

The university requires facilities that reflect the uniqueness, values, dignity and beauty of the First Nations it represents. They will include appropriate recognition and integration of the role of the Elders, cultural symbols and the First Nations connectedness to the land

Mission

The mission of the First Nations University of Canada is to enhance the quality of life, and to preserve, protect and interpret the history, language, culture and artistic heritage of First Nations.

The First Nations University of Canada will acquire and expand its base of knowledge and understanding in the best interests of First Nations and for the benefit of society by providing opportunities of quality bilingual and bicultural education under the mandate and control of the First Nations of Saskatchewan.

The First Nations University of Canada is a First Nations' controlled university-college that provides educational opportunities to both First Nations and non-First Nations university students selected from a provincial, national and international base.

HISTORY

In May 1976, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations in partnership with the University of Regina shared a vision to establish the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC). The university-college is independently administered to serve the academic, cultural and spiritual needs of First Nations students. Through the federation agreement, FNUUniv graduates convocate prepared for the workforce with certificates, diplomas and degrees awarded by the University of Regina. All FNUUniv programs and faculty are approved and accredited by the University of Regina, and all FNUUniv students enjoy the benefits of the federation. The federated relationship has proved beneficial in many ways to FNUUniv, and will continue for the duration of this plan.

When SIFC first opened its doors in the fall of 1976, it offered the following programs: Indian Studies, Indian Languages, Indian Teacher Education, Social Work, Fine Arts (Indian Art, Indian Art History) and Social Sciences. Since then thousands of students have graduated from the institution. Many of Canada's top Indigenous business, community, and government leaders are graduates of FNUUniv.

On June 21, 2003, the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College officially changed its name to the First Nations University of Canada. This name change corresponded with the opening of FNUUniv's iconic Regina Campus building, designed by Indigenous architect Douglas Cardinal.

Since its inception, FNUUniv has worked to increase its enrollments and to provide educational opportunities for students on many backgrounds and interests. We are a unique institution that has the highest

concentration of Indigenous PhDs in the country. We are not just a native studies department or a mainstream university with a focus on Indigenous learning; we are a completely Indigenous institution.

FNUUniv is here to serve our community's interests through education in Treaties, Indigenous languages, culture, truth and reconciliation and Indigenous art. FNUUniv offers programs and services on three campuses: Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert (Northern Campus) with programs including Business Administration and Science. New programs in the areas of technology, science, engineering and management in the energy and mining sectors based on Indigenous principles of environmental sustainability are being developed to meet the emerging needs of students and communities.

The University has been a member of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) since 1994. FNUUniv is mandated and supported by the 74 First Nations communities in Saskatchewan through the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) to advance these values for its students. The FSIN is committed to honouring, protecting and enhancing the spirit and intent of treaties signed by the Crown in Right of Canada and the Chiefs and Headmen of Canada's First Nations. The mandate of FNUUniv is to serve Indigenous people across Canada and around the world.

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES, CULTURES AND TRADITIONS

The First Nations University of Canada has built a strong national and international reputation as a leader in delivering Indigenous higher education and promoting Indigenous knowledge. At its core, the University has developed unique programs, research, and services that have integrated Western knowledge and Indigenous knowledge.

The Elders have given direction to the University on its important role in assisting Indigenous youth with reconnecting and maintaining their Indigenous identity, culture and language. Many of the University's students have said that they want to learn more about their Indigenous culture and that they view FNUUniv as a place where they can achieve that. Others have indicated that they chose the FNUUniv because of the institution's commitment to Indigenous culture and languages. That is why a significant part of the University's mission is to promote, protect and interpret the history, language, culture and artistic heritage of Indigenous people while offering a balance in bicultural education.

Our excellence in delivering Indigenous higher education provides us a significant competitive advantage. Over the next five years we will ensure that we maintain our unique competitive advantage by continuing to develop and focus our instruction and learning environment on Indigenous language, culture and tradition and by partnering with Indigenous communities. We will also seek to capitalize on this competitive advantage by ensuring that as many people as possible are aware of our efforts in this area.

“Students don’t know their own culture...it is important that the Elders have to be involved in the University.”

ELDER FRED PASKIMIN, SWEETGRASS FIRST NATION

“When we say man made law this is what has been imposed on us for years and years...not Creator’s law.....We have to teach the young people the difference.”

ELDER CECILE STANDINGHORN, SWEETGRASS FIRST NATION

GOALS

1. Enhance the use of traditional Indigenous methodologies and content in the classroom
2. Increase the awareness of the University's unique Indigenous research, programming and services
3. Engage communities on an ongoing basis and extend outreach and awareness of the cultural initiatives of the University
4. Strengthen the University's unique advantage by continuing to build its cultural capacity
5. Strengthen the number of partnerships with Indigenous organizations, institutions, and communities
6. Explore innovative ways to increase the dissemination of Indigenous knowledge through research by establishing an Indigenous knowledge research foundation and a journal

INNOVATIVE STUDENT **LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

As the student population becomes increasingly diverse and informed, the First Nations University of Canada understands that students expect much more from universities than simply learning course content and graduating with a degree. FNUUniv aims to adapt to the changing needs of Indigenous communities by increasing student opportunities in the larger economy and society. The goal for FNUUniv is to innovate accordingly to provide the best possible experience for all students within traditional learning systems and ways of knowing.

Our goal of greater satisfaction and increased student success will be achieved by improving our students' academic experience through attention to student service value, active learning and teaching strategies, formative assessment, relevant courses and flexible learning opportunities. With the aim of exceeding student expectations, diversifying the curriculum and enriching the learning experience adds value for students, faculty, staff, and the campus culture.

“The world has become a knowledge-based society. Education at FNUUniv provides not only knowledge but also ethics and values to prosper.”

CADMUS DELORME, BUSINESS ALUMNUS

“FNUUniv’s connection to First Nations communities not only provides quality post-secondary education, but also enhances Indian control of Indian education.”

CHIEF TODD PEIGAN, PASQUA FIRST NATION

GOALS

1. Develop new innovative and relevant academic programs and delivery options
2. Improve the quality of student services and retention to enhance the student experience
3. Increase student enrollment by 10% year-over-year for the duration of the plan
4. Take steps to strengthen relationships with K-12 schools
5. Create an internal quality assurance process in order to review and revise programs on an ongoing basis
6. Increase the number and variety of student scholarships targeted at the needs of students
7. Develop a work plan that identifies deliberate and incremental action taken towards academic independence and independent degree granting authority

SUSTAINABLE **GROWTH**

The First Nations University of Canada will pursue sustained development by securing funding sources, developing campuses, and creating professional practice in its programming, staffing and stakeholder relations.

The University will pursue expansion and diversification of the University's revenue streams. Sustainable funding will allow the university to position itself for continued growth by integrating and leveraging inherent strengths in each of the four priority areas within the strategic plan.

Long-term capital planning will address the University's physical needs for infrastructure such as more classrooms, additional office space, expanded recreational and cultural facilities, childcare capacity, and student residences.

The University will enhance its processes to attract, recruit and retain excellent faculty and staff while setting specific targets for professional development and creating a culture of professional accountability, administration and governance.

Indigenous knowledge is distinguished from western knowledge systems by its origin and its integration in the culture of Indigenous people. As a commitment to the national and international community, FNUUniv will continue to encourage the promotion, protection and interpretation of Indigenous Knowledge.

FNUUniv will continue to offer classes in an Indigenous learning environment while developing enhanced curriculum and new programs targeted at relevant learner skills and community and industry needs.

GOALS

1. Enhance our reputation as a nationally and internationally renowned institution of choice for Indigenous education and research
2. Identify sustainable funding sources that will expand and diversify the University's revenue streams
3. Develop a long-term capital plan for the entire University that will include a focus on securing appropriate campus space for Prince Albert and Saskatoon
4. Attract, develop and retain excellent staff and faculty
5. Create a professional development plan
6. Conduct a thorough review of existing policies and devise new policies where needed

ENHANCED **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

As the First Nations University of Canada moves forward along its path of growth and innovation, engagement with key stakeholders becomes increasingly crucial.

Effective stakeholder engagement supports the strengthening of positive relationships with students, faculty, staff, alumni, Indigenous communities, industry, other educational institutions and both the provincial and federal governments.

Stakeholder engagement ensures that FNUUniv is truly working for the benefit of the community-at-large by delivering education and research initiatives that are responsive to their needs.

A focus on engagement also ensures stakeholder awareness of the University's excellence in teaching, research, knowledge transfer, community services, industry and partnership. The following section outlines the different stakeholders with whom we want to engage and the various goals we would like to achieve within each area.

GOALS

1. Enhance the mutually beneficial relationship between the University of Regina and the First Nations University of Canada to increase the number and depth of partnerships in the areas of program development, student service and research collaboration
2. Develop a marketing campaign targeted at prospective and existing students and other stakeholders
3. Actively engage Elders and Alumni to increase their participation at FNUUniv
4. Identify and implement ways the University can engage and collaborate with Indigenous communities with a focus on community-based programming
5. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with industry that will lead to additional funding and the continued development of relevant programming
6. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with other post-secondary educational institutions within the context of the existing federation agreement
7. Strengthen relationships with Indigenous, federal, provincial and municipal governments

CONCLUSION: **A STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS**

What sets FNUniv apart?

In its 37 year history, the First Nations University of Canada has become a world leader and a successful model of Indigenous higher learning. FNUniv offers a competitive advantage through a unique set of curricula, classes, and research. The primary focus of teaching and research led by FNUniv faculty is to provide Indigenous knowledge-based higher education on our campuses and in our communities to enhance quality of life of Indigenous people. This focused perspective assists FNUniv in creating sustainable growth through capacity building and the innovative educational programming. The University will further develop its flexible and responsive learning environments while anticipating emerging fields of Indigenous study. Working in collaboration with First Nations and Métis communities, academic partners and others, FNUniv will serve as a leader for Indigenous higher education in Canada for the next five years and beyond.



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