

National Indigenous¹ University Senior Leaders' Association
Terms of Reference
August 5, 2022

The purpose of the **National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association (NIUSLA)** is to bring together Indigenous senior administrative and / or academic leaders who have **University and Faculty/College/School² wide mandates**, to network and to engage in constructive dialogue and actions that pertain to the roles and responsibilities of leadership within the academic university context. NIUSLA provides members the opportunity to share experiences, information, provide recommendations, identify areas of success and need within the academy.

Membership

The membership will consist of senior administrative or academic leaders who are Indigenous who have **University or Faculty/College/School wide mandates** (e.g., policy and strategic development and implementation) from universities in Canada. Membership guidelines will be reviewed annually to be responsive to the changing academic landscape.

Goals

NIUSLA will strive to achieve its strategic goals and objectives by working collaboratively, encouraging and promoting expressions of self-determination, and leaning into the strengths of its members within non-Indigenous university contexts.

- Develop a vibrant and recognized leadership association of University Indigenous senior leaders;
- Address challenges and issues relevant to Indigenous senior leaders;
- Increase the communication and resource capacity of NIUSLA;
- Seek to partner with Indigenous colleges / Indigenous higher education institutions and uplift the work of other Indigenous educational partners; and
- Strengthen and build capacities of Indigenous senior leaders.

Objectives

The principles or objectives of NIUSLA are to:

- be the national network for Indigenous senior leaders within universities;
- share resources and processes that support Indigenous leadership;
- create initiatives that advance the goals of NIUSLA;
- participate and contribute to the Canadian post-secondary policy landscape on Indigenous priorities; and
- advance issues and concerns of Indigenous peoples (faculty, staff, students, community members and leaders).

Structure

¹ For the purposes of this association, the term Indigenous refers to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada and United States mainland.

² Structures within University organizations. Faculty—a group of university departments concerned with a major division of knowledge.

Co-Chairs

Two Co-Chairs will be selected, by consensus, at the last meeting of the association in the Winter term. In the first year one co-chair will serve for a one-year term; one co-chair will serve for a two-year term. Thereafter all terms shall be two years. Terms begin on June 1. Co-chairs should be representative of different universities.

Executive Committee

Three members, selected from the association who are representatives of different universities, the two co-chairs plus the outgoing co-chair will serve in the role of 'executive committee.'

The members who are not co-chairs can serve up to a three year term and will be selected at the last meeting of the association in the Winter term.

The outgoing co-chair will serve on the executive committee for 1 year.

The executive committee has the responsibility to appoint people to interim positions until the positions are filled.

Frequency of Meetings

There will be two meetings in each of the Fall and Winter Terms that will be up to a half day (3 hours) long and established in the last meeting of the Winter term. Other meetings may be planned throughout the academic year (June - May) for 1.5 hours.

When necessary for emergent issues, additional meetings will be organized at least 1 week in advance of the date by the co-chairs.

The University of one of the Co-Chairs will assume responsibility for organizing the meetings and inviting an Elder / knowledge holder to participate.

Full meetings or portions of meetings may be [in-camera](#) unless otherwise decided by the membership.

Breakout Circles (Groups)

This association will meet as a large group for updates, education opportunities, principles development, working documents, and conference or forum planning. Smaller breakout circles (groups), specific to position or task designations and responsibilities can be initiated when necessary.

This framework includes opportunities for leadership mentorship and succession planning (i.e., encouraging people to consider senior leadership positions) - e.g. in house education as a form of mentoring; retention and career retention.

Process

- NIUSLA will conduct its business and make its recommendations by respecting consensus processes.
- When there is a dissenting view then the dissenter will explain their dissent and offer an alternative solution or resolution.

- Attendance at the meetings may include physical presence or attendance through electronic channels such as video or teleconference.
- The association has the ability to invite other individuals to its meetings if specific expertise or experience is required.

Values and Principles of Interactions or Orienting Principles of Engagement or Communication Norms

- Kirkness and Barnhardt - 4 R's (2001): Respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility
- <https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education2/the4rs.pdf>
- We come to the space with good intentions and a good heart.
- Every idea and comment is listened to - each individual's contribution is valued.
- Everyone is on their own journey.
- We are a collective as an organization, and individuals on a learning journey.
- It is okay to question and wonder about any topics and ideas being discussed in our meetings.
- Discernment is practiced.
- Taking a break and leaving the circle is okay and returning to circle is okay when you are ready; feel safe to return when comfortable.
- Respect and trusting without judgment and caring for selves.
- Contributions are uplifting of spirit in order to move forward in a positive way.
- Practices to consider that are long established within our nations' knowledge systems - e.g. visioning

Values and Principles for Review of Terms of Reference

NIUSLA terms of reference will be reviewed every two years and approved in the last meeting of the Winter.