



# Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, June 7, 2022

## ***The First Nations University of Canada and National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association release findings from Inaugural National Indigenous Identity Forum***

Regina, Saskatchewan – The First Nations University of Canada (FNUUniv) and the National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association (NIUSLA) are pleased to release the findings from the inaugural National Indigenous Identity Forum, held virtually at FNUUniv on March 9 and 10, 2022. The forum was convened to discuss Indigenous perspectives on identity and citizenship and wise practices to validate Indigenous-specific opportunities at academic institutions.

"This was a collective nation-building exercise for all who attended. I was captivated by the rich and vibrant perspectives and conversations, and many teachings still linger for me to process." FNUUniv President, Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann stated, "Our Indigenous philosophies and teachings will guide a path forward because they are as applicable today as they were hundreds of years ago."

Lead event organizer, and FNUUniv Senior Policy and Strategic Officer, Meika Taylor noted that during the two-day forum, "It became clear that we needed to shift the narrative away from identity towards citizenship. As sovereign nations, Indigenous communities hold inherent rights to determine the citizens of their communities. This moves us beyond the question of "how do you self-identify?" to "what nation do you have citizenship with?", in essence, who claims you?"

According to Manon Tremblay, senior director of Indigenous Directions at Concordia University, and NIUSLA member, "This first conversation on Indigenous citizenship is an important step for post-secondary institutions across Canada. As we continue to increase our efforts at reconciliation and decolonization, and as we start to embrace Indigenous knowledge systems in academia, we need to ensure that Indigenous priorities, interests, and expectations in post-secondary education are addressed and managed by Indigenous citizens who have the lived experience and cultural grounding necessary to carry the work."

The *Indigenous Voices on Indigenous Identity, March 2022* report is publicly available on the FNUUniv website at <https://www.fnuniv.ca/wp-content/uploads/Indigenous-Voices-on-Indigenous-Identity-National-Indigenous-Identity-Forum-Report-March-22-June-22-FINAL.pdf>. Dr. Florence Glanfield, Vice-Provost Indigenous Programming & Research at the University of Alberta and NIUSLA member noted, "The report provides a fulsome account of the ideas that unfolded during the forum and will be the starting place for ongoing conversations and deliberations related to claims of Indigenous identity at post-secondary institutions across the place now called Canada."

The initial forum has initiated demand to continue the conversations and build on the initial findings. “From the feedback that we’ve received, we learned that we have just begun the dialogue at this forum and that more dedicated Indigenous space is needed for our academic communities to continue the conversation,” added Dr. Ottmann.

A second two-day hybrid event will be held at FNUUniv’s Regina campus on October 26 and 27, 2022. Similar to the inaugural forum, but with expanded contributions from Indigenous communities, it will be restricted to Indigenous participants and feature presentations, panels, and discussions with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Political Leaders, staff, students, scholars, and academics from across Canada.

“Because the First Nations University of Canada has been identified as a safe space for the Indigenous invitation-only forum, we welcome the opportunity to host another Indigenous invitation-only forum again in October. We expect the circle will be opened to a larger group in future discussions and forums following the October event,” noted Dr. Ottmann.

### **About First Nations University of Canada**

The First Nations University of Canada (FNUUniv) was founded in 1976 and is a First Nations-owned post-secondary institution that bridges our ceremonies, knowledge keepers, languages, and traditions to deliver high-quality post-secondary education. This transformative impact will lead to the pride and success of all students, First Nations communities and Canada. For more information about FNUUniv, please visit <http://fnuniv.ca>.

### **About the National Indigenous University Leaders’ Association (NIUSLA):**

NIUSLA brings together Indigenous senior administrative leaders from academic institutions, who have a University or Faculty/College/School-wide mandate, 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 members have the opportunity to share experiences and information, provide recommendations, and identify areas of success and need within post-secondary institutions.

- 30 -

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