



FIRST NATIONS
UNIVERSITY
OF CANADA



MEDIA RELEASE

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First Nations University of Canada Honours 50 Years of Indigenous Education, Leadership and Community

Regina, SK (Treaty 4 Territory) – First Nations University of Canada (FNUUniv) brought together students, alumni, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, faculty, staff, First Nations leaders, partners and community members on September 10 for its 50th Anniversary Gala at the Hotel Saskatchewan.

The evening celebrated five decades of Indigenous-led education and honoured the people whose vision, leadership and perseverance helped establish and strengthen the University.

“For 50 years, First Nations University of Canada has created a place where students can pursue their education while remaining connected to their cultures, languages, identities and communities,” said Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann, President of FNUUniv. “This anniversary gives us an opportunity to honour the people who built this institution, celebrate those who continue to carry its vision forward and look with hope toward the next 50 years.”

FNUUniv’s story began in 1976 with the establishment of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC). Created through the vision and determination of First Nations leaders, SIFC was founded on the belief that Indigenous students should have access to university education grounded in their own knowledges, languages, cultures and worldviews.

The establishment of SIFC reflected the principles advanced in the landmark 1972 policy paper *Indian Control of Indian Education*, which called for First Nations people to have a central role in determining how their children and communities are educated.

What began as a small federated college has grown into a nationally recognized Indigenous post-secondary institution. Today, FNUUniv serves approximately 6,000 enrolments annually, and nearly 7,000 graduates carry the University’s teachings, values and leadership into communities, organizations and professions across Canada and beyond.

A central part of the gala was the recognition of two individuals whose contributions reach back to the University’s earliest years.

Dr. Alexander Blair Stonechild of Muscowpetung First Nation, the first faculty member hired at SIFC in 1976, was honoured for nearly 50 years of teaching, scholarship, advocacy and leadership. Through his research and writing, Dr. Stonechild has contributed to a deeper understanding of First Nations histories, education and

spirituality while emphasizing the importance of learning from Elders and recognizing the value of Indigenous knowledges.

His contributions also extended to the University's physical home. During his time as Executive Director of Planning and Development, Dr. Stonechild helped advance the building initiative and led fundraising efforts toward establishing a new home for the institution. Designed by world-renowned Indigenous architect Douglas Cardinal, the Regina Campus was completed in 2003. Its flowing, curved form reflects the lifelong journey of learning and the interconnectedness of people, land and sky.

Elder Sid Fiddler of Waterhen Lake First Nation was also honoured during the evening. A member of the institution's first graduating class, he earned his Certificate in Social Work in 1976. He later contributed to the University as an administrator and instructor in the Social Work program and also served as Chief of Waterhen Lake First Nation.

Recognizing FNU's first faculty member alongside a member of its first graduating class created a meaningful connection between the institution's beginnings and the generations of students, educators and leaders who have carried its work forward.

The gala was emceed by award-winning hip-hop artist Eekwol of Muskoday First Nation and nehiyaw and Kanien'kehá writer and comedian Shawn Cuthand. The evening also featured a Grand Entry, performances by powwow dancers—most of whom are FNU alumni—and jiggers from Prince Albert, reflections on FNU's 50-year journey, and a live musical performance by acclaimed singer-songwriter LOV of Poundmaker Cree Nation in Treaty 6 Territory.

Throughout its history, FNU has remained grounded in the guidance of Elders and Knowledge Keepers and in the languages, ceremonies and intellectual traditions of First Nations. Students learn through academic study as well as through culture, identity and connection to community.

As FNU enters its next chapter, the University remains committed to strengthening Indigenous education, student success, language revitalization, research, community partnerships and Indigenous excellence.

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About First Nations University of Canada

Established in 1976, the First Nations University of Canada (FNU) is a leading Indigenous-owned post-secondary institution dedicated to advancing Indigenous knowledge and education. FNU serves both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, delivering high-quality post-secondary programs rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems, languages and cultures. FNU operates campuses in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert, as well as the nēwoskan Traditional Campus near St. Louis, Saskatchewan.

Learn more at www.fnuniv.ca.

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