

MEDIA RELEASE

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First Nations University of Canada and University of Zululand sign historic Memorandum of Understanding

Regina, SK — On September 5th, the First Nations University of Canada (FNUUniv) and the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) of South Africa signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), establishing a new partnership between the two universities. Collectively, through this MOU, FNUUniv and UNIZULU seek to engage in international knowledge exchanges focused on Indigenous knowledge systems.

The MOU signing was the culmination of partnership and collaboration discussions that began earlier in 2025 at the “Indigenous Knowledge Systems & Restorative Development in Africa” International Conference, hosted by the Africa Indigenous Knowledge Research Network and held in Entebbe, Uganda, where FNUUniv President Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann was invited to speak on FNUUniv’s unique position as Canada’s only national Indigenous university.

“Indigenous knowledges, with their sophisticated ways of knowing, being, and doing, transcend continents,” explains Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann, President of FNUUniv. “Our relatives in South Africa carry their own rich Indigenous knowledges, and we look forward to working together to share, learn, and collectively advance decolonization and Indigenization on a global scale.”

The two Universities share a common mission to provide the highest quality education for Indigenous Peoples and share a joint vision for enhancing the student experience by implementing international learning opportunities and knowledge exchanges based on their shared core value of delivering quality student-centric programs.

The Universities have agreed to explore opportunities for joint programmes promoting institutional development and academic enhancement, including faculty and student trainings, academic and cultural exchanges, scientific research, and joint publications.

“UNIZULU’s Vision 2027, ‘A Node of African Thought,’ strategically resonates with FNU’s position as an epicenter of Indigenous knowledges, ways of being, knowing, and doing. By foregrounding African epistemologies and ontologies across teaching and learning, research and innovation, and community engagement, UNIZULU reinforces FNU’s commitment to sustaining and advancing Indigenous epistemologies,” says Xoliswa Mtose, Vice Chancellor and Principal, UNIZULU. In pursuit of this shared vision, the two universities have committed to cultivating joint programmes that promote institutional development and academic enhancement—encompassing faculty and student training, academic and cultural exchanges, collaborative scientific research, and co-authored publications.

FNU and UNIZULU have identified several key activities under this new MOU, including:

- Student exchanges for academic development in areas of study and research which both University’s have in common;
- The exchange of publications for scholarly, teaching and information purposes;
- The exchange of academic staff for the purpose of research, teaching, and the presentation of special courses in their field of specialization;
- The development of joint academic programmes;
- Organizing conferences, seminars, symposia, and special academic programmes;
- The development of joint research activities geared towards youth entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihood through Indigenous languages; and
- The exchange of visiting scholars for short term and long-term lectureships.

The University of Zululand delegation, travelling from South Africa to First Nations University of Canada’s Regina, Saskatchewan campus, included Professor X Mtose, Vice Chancellor and Principal, Professor KC Lehloenya, Dean, Faculty of Sciences, Agriculture and Engineering, Professor J Mashiya, Director of International Office, and Professor I Moyo, Deputy Dean, Research and Innovation, Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering. The visit included a morning pipe ceremony with Elder Dennis Omeasoo, tour of the Regina campus, faculty presentations, and a visit to the McKenzie Art Gallery.

In 2026, First Nations University of Canada will host the 2nd Annual Africa Indigenous Knowledge Research Network (AIKRN) Conference from June 16 to 18, 2026, at the Regina campus, in partnership with Carleton University.

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About First Nations University of Canada

The First Nations University of Canada (FNUniv) was founded in 1976 and is a unique national First Nations owned and operated post-secondary institution that aspires to have transformative impact by bridging ceremonies, knowledge keepers, languages, and traditions with the delivery of high-quality post-secondary education that will lead to the pride and success of all Indigenous and communities. FNUniv has campuses in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert, and provides programming nationally. For more information about FNUniv, please visit fnuniv.ca

About University of Zululand

The University of Zululand is a comprehensive university in South Africa offering approximately 252 accredited degrees, diploma, and certificate courses across the faculties of Arts; Education; Science, Agriculture and Engineering as well as Commerce, Administration and Law at the KwaDlangezwa and Richards Bay campuses. Popular courses include Law, Education, Engineering, Nursing Science, Agronomy, Hydrology, Biochemistry, Microbiology and Sport Science. UNIZULU students have the opportunity to specialise their degrees according to their areas of interest within their respective fields. In addition, the University believes in promoting a culture of learning in an environment that is conducive to personal growth and academic development.