



FIRST NATIONS
UNIVERSITY
OF CANADA



MEDIA RELEASE

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First Nations University of Canada Celebrates 50 Years of Indigenous-Led Education and Leadership

Regina, SK (Treaty 4 Territory) - Today, the First Nations University of Canada gathered in celebration, reflection, and gratitude to commemorate 50 years of Indigenous-led education during special anniversary gatherings held across its campuses in Regina, Saskatoon, and Northern Campus.

Students, alumni, Elders, leaders, faculty, staff, and community members came together to honour the story of FNUUniv — an institution rooted in Indigenous knowledge, language, culture, ceremony, and the strength of the people.

The day marked the commemoration of the May 27, 1976 University of Regina Senate approval of the federation of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC), now the First Nations University of Canada.

At the Regina Campus, the commemorative program began in a good way with a Pipe Ceremony led by Elder Dennis Omeasoo, followed by an Honour Song shared by Everet Sayer. Reflections and remarks were shared throughout the morning by:

- Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann, President, First Nations University of Canada
- Chief Jonathan Pasap, Member of Board of Governors, First Nations University of Canada
- Her Honour, Honourable Bernadette McIntyre, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan
- Megan Patterson, MLA for Moose Jaw Wakamow
- Dr. Jeff Keshen, President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Regina
- Milton Tootoosis, First Nations University of Canada Alumnus
- Elder Margaret Rockthunder, First Nations University of Canada Elder
- Cherish Jean-Baptiste, Emcee

Meanwhile, Saskatoon Campus and Northern Campus community members also gathered for pipe ceremonies, community lunches, and anniversary activities recognizing the University's history, achievements, and future across Saskatchewan and Canada. Northern Campus additionally hosted an afternoon Open House welcoming community members to celebrate and learn more about FNUUniv programs and services.

For 50 years, FNUUniv has remained grounded in Indigenous teachings, ceremonies, languages, and communities. Guided by Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and generations of Indigenous leaders, the University has created space for students to learn not only through academics, but through culture, identity, and connection to community.

At FNUUniv, education has always been more than a degree — it is a journey of becoming, remembering, reclaiming, healing, and rising.

Founded in 1976 as the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC), FNUUniv was created through the vision and determination of First Nations leaders who believed Indigenous students deserved an education rooted in their own knowledges, languages, cultures, and worldviews. SIFC was a living expression of the principles outlined in the landmark 1972 policy paper, *Indian Control of Indian Education*. What began with a small circle of leaders, students, and supporters has grown into a nationally recognized Indigenous post-secondary institution serving learners across Saskatchewan, Canada, and beyond.

“Our ancestors envisioned a place where Indigenous students could learn without leaving themselves behind — a place grounded in our knowledges, languages, ceremonies, and ways of being,” said Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann, President of FNUUniv. “For 50 years, FNUUniv has carried that vision forward. Today, we honour the grit, perseverance, and love that built this institution, while recommitting ourselves to future generations and the next chapter of Indigenous education.”

Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann also recognized the many individuals who helped build and strengthen FNUUniv over the past five decades, including late Ida Wasacase, SIFC’s first leader, whose vision and dedication helped lay the foundation for the institution, and Dr. Blair Stonechild, one of the University’s earliest faculty members, whose nearly 50 years of teaching, scholarship, and leadership helped shape generations of learners.

Dr. Ottmann also shared that FNUUniv will unveil a new Strategic Plan later this year to guide the University’s next chapter. Grounded in First Nations ways of knowing, being, and doing, the plan will continue strengthening Indigenous education, student success, language revitalization, community partnerships, and Indigenous excellence.

Throughout its history, FNUUniv has created opportunities for Indigenous students to succeed while remaining connected to Indigenous cultures, languages, and communities. From land-based learning and ceremony to research, partnerships, and academic excellence, the University continues to support the next generation of Indigenous leaders.

Today, FNUUniv serves approximately 6,000 enrolments annually, with nearly 7,000 graduates carrying FNUUniv teachings, values, and leadership into communities across Saskatchewan, Canada, and beyond.

The celebrations concluded with community lunches and opportunities for fellowship, reflection, and reconnection across campuses. Guests also learned more about upcoming 50th Anniversary initiatives and commemorative activities taking place throughout the anniversary year.

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