

University of  
Lethbridge



# **Report to the President First Nations Metis Inuit (FNMI) CENTRE**

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## Executive Summary

The University of Lethbridge can justifiably take pride in being among the first universities in Canada to include a major in Native American Studies among its Liberal Education components. It can also take pride in the extensive range of innovative academic programs, research, and creative activity related to FNMI peoples developed across faculties, and active student services support programs established. Nevertheless, discernible gaps and incongruences have emerged over the years that need to be addressed if the university is to keep faith with its original prescient vision.

To address those gaps and incongruences, in September 2011 President Mike Mahon asked Professor Leroy Little Bear, Roy Weasel Fat (Red Crow Community College Vice-President Academic) and Professor Jane O'Dea to develop an overarching strategy that would create support for FNMI students, faculty, staff, and community members at the University of Lethbridge, including exploring the desirability and level of support for establishing an FNMI Centre/Gathering Place on campus.

The team consulted widely. They talked with Blackfoot, other FNMI, university and local communities, visited Native Centres in Alberta and British Columbia, and examined recent government and university reports that chart recommended directions and exemplary practices. Based on their research and consultation, the team formulated seven major recommendations.

These seven recommendations align with the University's 2009-2013 Strategic Plan by:

- Increasing the participation of FNMI peoples in all aspects of the University community.
- Providing a visible demonstration of the value we place on our relationship with FNMI peoples.
- Facilitating our ability to collaborate widely to develop programs that are relevant and available to them.
- Providing a venue and overarching structure that enable us to work more effectively with FNMI peoples to ensure that those partnerships, and the resulting programs, continue to meet all students needs.

### **Recommendation #1: Create a Niitsitapi Gathering Place on campus**

- The Gathering Place will create for Blackfoot and other Aboriginal students, faculty, and staff a welcoming "home away from home," a space appropriate for ceremony, smudging,<sup>1</sup> and celebration, where they can gather together in community and collaboratively support one another in their educational aspirations.
- In keeping with First Nations tradition, the Gathering Place will acknowledge, respect, and honour the values, history, customs, and culture of the Blackfoot speaking nations on whose territorial lands the University of Lethbridge resides. But it will be open and welcoming to all FNMI peoples, asking them to respect the protocols of the territory while honouring the diversity of values and beliefs among Aboriginal communities.
- Members of the University, the city of Lethbridge, and surrounding areas will be welcomed and encouraged participate in creating a nurturing, co-operative, mutual learning environment.

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<sup>1</sup> "Smudging" is a cleansing ceremony where certain herbs, such as sweetgrass or sage, are burnt and the smoke is rubbed or brushed over the body.

- For students, the Gathering Place will provide a place to meet with Elders and share stories, teaching and wisdom. It will be a vibrant and empowering cultural community, where Blackfoot and other Aboriginal languages can be spoken, and where students can explore new knowledge together.
- Within the broader academic community, the Gathering Place will play an important educational role by fostering appreciation and respect for FNMI heritage throughout the university and beyond. It will offer research seminars, speakers series, workshops, dialogues, cultural events, and other activities. These events and activities will strive to foster cross-cultural awareness and encourage personal, social, intellectual, and cultural interactions between Blackfoot and other FNMI peoples and the University, the city of Lethbridge, and surrounding communities.
- The Gathering Place will act as a central communication and referral locus for Aboriginal programs, research, and student support services, sharing information about what is going on throughout campus. It will include activities designed to reach out to Blackfoot and other FNMI elementary, middle and high-school students, to show them the possibilities and benefits of a post-secondary education and to enable them to see themselves in a university environment.

**Recommendation #2: Establish an Elders Program in the Niitsitapi Gathering Place that will provide more consistent access to Elders for students, faculty, and staff in the University of Lethbridge**

- The Elders Program will provide support and mentoring for students (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal). It will also provide: support, advice, and guidance to the university community with respect to FNMI-related academic curriculum and programs; research and creative activity protocols; and cross-cultural awareness.

**Recommendation #3: Establish an Aboriginal Education Policy, which is approved by General Faculties Council**

- The establishment and approval by General Faculties Council of an Aboriginal Education Policy will reinvigorate, strengthen, and reaffirm the university's historic commitment to Aboriginal peoples, reestablishing it as a central priority of the university.
- The policy will also acknowledge a collective responsibility for its support and implementation.

**Recommendation #4: Establish a GFC Standing Committee to administer, implement, and monitor the Aboriginal Education Policy**

- The Aboriginal Education Policy Standing Committee will be an overarching, supportive structure. It will oversee the realization of the university's collective commitment to FNMI matters. It will coordinate FNMI-related programs, research and creative activity, support, and initiatives across campus.
- Initiatives across the university will continue to be subject to existing approval procedures and authority. The Aboriginal Education Policy Standing Committee, however, will bring awareness of such initiatives to university administration, faculty, staff, and students as appropriate.

**Recommendation #5: For the Gathering Place staff, implement administrative structures from other Native centres or gathering places**

- The Gathering Place should adopt administrative structures similar to other Native centres or gathering places:
  - A **Director** oversees, administers, and monitors all operations and activities
  - An **Administrative Assistant** provides support and assistance in carrying out operations and activities.
  - An **Elders Advisory Committee** provides guidance, support, and assistance to the Director in Blackfoot and other FNMI related areas.
- To consolidate FNMI related support services in one central area the university should consider locating the Native Advising Office in the Gathering Place.

**Recommendation #6: Review the funding for Aboriginal Student Support**

- A review should be conducted of the financial resources allocated to ROSS and the Native Student Advisor Office, to assess their adequacy to meet the needs of FNMI student support.

**Recommendation #7: Create an appropriate space**

- An appropriate space should be created that can accommodate all of the activities indicated in the report.

## Current Context

Hundreds of generations of Blackfoot people have come and gone on the northwestern plains since before and after the melting of the glaciers that covered the northern part of the North American continent. Traditional Blackfoot territory included a vast tract of land from the North Saskatchewan River to the Yellowstone: from the continental divide of the Rockies to the confluence of the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers. This was the land given to the Blackfoot according to oral history. Within this territory the Blackfoot developed their own unique culture, customs, governance, values, worldview, religion, and educational practices that served them beneficially for generations.

Built on the banks of the Oldman River, the University of Lethbridge rests upon traditional Blackfoot Territory. The University is within the geographic site of a Blackfoot legend about a “medicine rock.” Based on the legend, the Blackfoot gave the University the Blackfoot name “Nato’ohkotok” (Medicine Rock) to indicate the wisdom, knowledge, solidity, and connection to the land and people of Blackfoot territory.

The University of Lethbridge has other references to Blackfoot tradition. The institution has a Blackfoot honour song. The corner stone of the University Library includes a Blackfoot translation of the university motto “I am still learning.” And the Coat of Arms, when unveiled, will include important Blackfoot symbolism.

### Aboriginal Enrolment

As of December 1, 2011, 418 self-identified Aboriginal students were enrolled at the University of Lethbridge (approximately 5% of the total student population), of which 261 were female and 157 male. Seventy-nine students were married, and 316 unmarried, with the marital status of 23 unknown. The university does not collect information about students with children. But we know from experience that the majority of Aboriginal students enrolled in the university have dependent children.<sup>2</sup>

With respect to the diversity of FNMI cultures represented, four students are Inuit, 108 are Métis, with the remaining 306 combining 264 status Indians and 42 non-status Indians. The university does not collect information on particular First Nation enrolments, but we know that over half of enrolled Aboriginal students are from Kanaï and Pikani communities, the remainder coming from almost every province and territory in Canada. Aboriginal students are enrolled in all faculties and in virtually every program and major combination offered at the University of Lethbridge.

Forty-three of the self-identified Aboriginal students are currently enrolled in graduate studies. Four are enrolled in the M.A. program, two in M.Sc., two in the M.Ed. Counselling Psychology program, and five in the Faculty of Education Master of Counselling program. In addition, 30 students are enrolled in the M. Ed. in FNMI Curriculum Leadership program, with the first round of graduates expected to convocate in May 2012.

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<sup>2</sup> That experience is supported by research about Aboriginal enrolments in universities across Canada, which indicates, “Aboriginal students are more likely to have dependent children (29.6 percent in a 2002 survey sample).” Holmes, *Redressing the Balance*, 12.

## Academic Programs

The University of Lethbridge has a long history with respect to Native American peoples, developing and offering innovative academic programs in every faculty, conducting valuable research and creative activity, and providing a range of targeted supports. The following provides a brief summation of the relevant history and current “state of play” in the university with respect to these areas.<sup>3</sup>

### Faculty of Arts and Science

In 1974-75, the Government of Alberta gave the U of L the mandate to establish and include Native American Studies among its Liberal Education components.<sup>4</sup> In response to this mandate, a Department of Native American Studies, among the first of its kind in Canadian universities, was established in the Faculty of Arts and Science. The BA degree with a major in Native American Studies was unique and ahead of its time in being developed jointly by representatives of southern Alberta’s Aboriginal communities and university officials, and in having all of its classes taught from the Native perspective yet inclusive of all students. The program provides a general background for people interested in Native affairs taught from the Native perspective, and creates an awareness and appreciation of cultural differences. In the program students investigate FNMI history, heritage, and culture, and contemporary issues that face FNMI communities.

### Faculty of Education

In 1979-80 the Faculty of Education implemented a major in Native American Studies Education, together with several related minors, including language and culture. The major was renamed Native Education in 1991-92, and the faculty is currently offering a combined BA/B.Ed. in this area.

In 2004 the Faculty received one-time government funding to offer the Niitsitapi Teacher Education Program. Created in collaboration with Red Crow Community College, the Niitsitapi program offered local First Nations students a teacher education program that incorporated Blackfoot culture, traditions, and knowledge as foundational components.<sup>5</sup> Niitsitapi was unique in that the entire program was built upon Blackfoot ways of knowing and of being. The first course (Kiipaitapiiysinnooni I and II) provided a foundation in the culture, values, and beliefs of the Blackfoot-speaking nations and introduced students to the role of Elders. Cultural supports and the involvement of Elders in all course and program components were critical throughout the Niitsitapi program. The collaboration in program design extended to course delivery. Some courses were co-taught, some were taught by Education faculty members who had extensive experience with Blackfoot culture, and others were taught by Blackfoot-speaking instructors. .

In 2008 the Faculty again received one-time government funding, this time to offer a Master of Education in FNMI Curriculum Leadership. This Masters program was open to Niitsitapi graduates and other qualified teachers with an understanding of Blackfoot culture, teaching methodology and ideology, who were interested in developing strategies and techniques in K-12 classrooms that incorporate it. The program is the first graduate program in Canada to focus on developing FNMI curriculum from a foundation of a particular First Nation’s knowledge and culture. Developed once again in collaboration with Red Crow Community College, Elders played an essential role in course development and delivery.

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<sup>3</sup> The information contained in the following section was acquired from interviews conducted during the consultation process, relevant documents submitted or gathered following those interviews, and U of L faculty websites.

<sup>4</sup> The original motion approving the proposal for a Native American Studies program took place in General Faculties Council, 19 February 1973.

<sup>5</sup> Campbell et al, *Summary Report: Niitsitapi Teacher Education Program*.

**Faculty of Management**

The Business Enterprises and Self-Governing Systems of Indian, Inuit and Métis Peoples Program was created in the Faculty of Management in 1979. It was the forerunner of the current First Nations' Governance Program, which was established in 2003. Offered through a partnership between the Faculty of Management and the Department of Native American Studies, the First Nations Governance certificate and degree programs are a unique blend of studies in First Nations governance and core business concepts. The programs give graduates the skills to take leadership roles in their communities and in management, entrepreneurial enterprises, band administration, First Nations liaison work, and self-government. Students gain significant insight into First Nations' historical, political, legal, and economic issues while acquiring strong business skills and managerial competency. The programs are not limited to Aboriginal students and welcome all students who may seek employment in positions requiring knowledge of Aboriginal people, their needs, their unique constitutional position within Canada, and their rights.

**Faculty of Health Sciences**

The Faculty of Health Sciences offers a bachelor's degree in Public Health, where students can choose to take courses focusing on Aboriginal Health, Aboriginal Community Development and Financial Management in Aboriginal Communities. The Faculty's Nursing Program also places special emphasis on issues related to rural, elderly and Aboriginal populations.

**Faculty of Fine Arts**

The development and approval of a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Native American Art) in Art Studio and Art History and Museum Studies is nearing completion, with an anticipated start date of September 2013. The university also has a large Native American art collection.

**Research and Creative Activity**

Research and creative activity pertaining to Aboriginal peoples is conducted in the Department of Native American Studies and across faculties, leading to some significant publications that enrich the Native American academic area of studies. An inventory of FNMI related research and creative activity at the University of Lethbridge, however, has never been done, making accurate information on the exact numbers and areas covered difficult to ascertain.

**Support Services**

In the early 1970s, the University of Lethbridge established a Native American student support service program. The university currently provides a range of support services to Aboriginal students, including academic support programs offered in various faculties, cultural and student support offered through the Registrar's Office and Student Services (ROSS), and various kinds of financial support targeted to Aboriginal students. The following sections summarize these initiatives.

**Academic Support Programs****Arts and Science: First Nations Transition Program**

In 2004, the university received one-time Government of Alberta funding to pilot a First Nations Transition Program (FNTP). It was subsequently granted a three- year extension, and thereafter permanent funding. Administered by the Faculty of Arts & Science, FNTP assists Aboriginal students with the transition to university by connecting Aboriginal culture to university culture, thereby increasing access to postsecondary education and completion rates for FNMI students. FNTP is a credit program with courses offered at the 0100 level. Admission to the program constitutes admission to the University. In 2006-07 the required core for all students covered four key areas: Information Literacy; Math Skills (two courses); Effective Writing Skills (two courses); and Cultural Studies.



Wherever possible instructors tailored course curriculum to the needs of the students and included First Nations issues, special challenges, and local history and geography of First Nations in southern Alberta. The involvement of Elders in individual courses gave students a connection to their family and cultural ties on the reserves. Students could also choose a Health Sciences stream, in which case they were required to take nine courses: the required core plus Chemistry, Biology, and an Introduction to Health Sciences. A new skills course in Computer Science was added to the core in 2007-08.

Although course offerings may vary slightly from year to year, courses currently taught in FNTP include: Anthropology; Art; Biology; Chemistry; Computer Science; Environmental Science; Introduction to Health Sciences; Interdisciplinary Studies; Mathematics; and Writing.

FNTP provides additional support to students through a speaker series, study skills workshops, counselling, academic and financial planning services, scholarships and loans information, and tutors and learning facilitators.

***Education: Special Case Admission and Peer Support***

Students of Aboriginal descent who have a CGPA and/or GPA in the major of less than 2.5 but equal to or greater than 2.0 can apply for special case admission to the Faculty of Education.

The B.Ed. program has a peer support system for Aboriginal students and a lounge, Itaohkanao'pi – The Meeting Place, for students and their guests. Students also have access to a designated faculty member advisor.

***Management: Support Services in the First Nations' Governance Program<sup>6</sup>***

Students admitted to the First Nations Governance program receive guidance and support from the First Nations Governance Coordinator. They also have access to tutorial support, mentorship, peer support, social activities, and an Elders support program (four days a month). In 2008-09, the Faculty of Management made these supports available to all Aboriginal students at the University of Lethbridge.

***Health Sciences: Support Program for Aboriginal Nursing Students***

In 2007, the University received funding to develop and offer the Support Program for Aboriginal Nursing Students (SPANS). The program helped recruit and retain Aboriginal students who were academically capable and interested in pursuing a nursing career. The SPANS program made possible a pre-nursing year<sup>7</sup> that prepared students for admission to the nursing program and provided additional academic and cultural supports throughout their studies, including a learning facilitator, Elders, and a mentorship program. Aboriginal students were also encouraged to take the practicum components of the nursing program in their home communities. The program proved to be enormously successful in recruiting and retaining students.

As a result of its success, the Faculty expanded SPANS to include Aboriginal students interested in pursuing a Bachelor of Health Sciences in Addictions Counselling or Public Health. Student numbers steadily increased, from seven Aboriginal nursing students to over 60 in the overall Health Sciences programs in just four years, with a corresponding rise in Aboriginal graduation rates. Funding for SPANS, however, was not renewed after the initial three-year period. The program ended in 2010.

The Faculty continued the supports developed through SPANS with internal funding. Support services are offered to FNMI students in the Bachelor of Nursing and Bachelor of Health Sciences Addictions

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<sup>6</sup> The Faculty of Management has an endowment fund targeted to support Aboriginal students enrolled in the First Nations Governance Program that funds the supports listed above.

<sup>7</sup> That pre-nursing year evolved into the *Introduction to Health Sciences* course currently taught in the First Nations Transition Program. The aim of the current course is to prepare and encourage Aboriginal students to consider in addition to degrees in Nursing, degrees in Addictions Counseling and Public Health.

Counselling and Public Health programs. These services include: a designated learning facilitator; advisors; mentorship programs; tutors; personal support and counselling; social networking; and scholarship and bursary application assistance.

In 2012, the Faculty of Health Sciences was selected from more than 250 entries to be recognized with a major award from the Changemakers Initiative: Inspiring Approaches to FNMI Learning. .

### ***Library***

The Library teaches Information Literacy to students in the First Nations Transition Program. The university also received funding to maintain a digital library to help preserve and promote the history and cultural heritage of the Blackfoot Confederacy.

### ***Cultural and Student Support***

#### ***Native Advisor Office***

ROSS has a Native Advisor Office that includes a Coordinator and Native Advisor. Re-established in 2003, the office provides advice and guidance to all Aboriginal students so that they can be successful in their academic programs. It also seeks to increase their sense of comfort and engagement with the university and to raise the cultural profile of FNMI peoples within the overall academic community while adhering to the First Nations protocol of honouring and acknowledging the Blackfoot speaking peoples on whose traditional territory the university resides.

The Native Advisor Office offers a range of important cultural and academic support services to Aboriginal students including:

- FNMI New Students Orientation (August/September).
- Welcome Back BBQ (September).
- Finding Your Way Booklets—A University Campus and Community Resource Guide.
- Native Awareness Week (March).
- Convocation recognition of FNMI graduates—presentation of an Eagle Feather (June and October).
- Eaglesnest emailing list enabling information to be easily shared with self-declared FNMI students.
- FNMI website (currently under development).
- Protocols supplies.
- University of Lethbridge Outdoor Tipi.
- Liaison with the Native American Students' Association (NASA).

Aboriginal students also have access to Counselling Services in the university. As well, an FNMI recruitment officer is located in ROSS.

#### ***Native American Students' Association***

General support for Aboriginal Students is also provided through the Native American Students' Association (NASA). Established in the early 1970s, NASA has a mandate to promote inter-cultural relations at the university, enhance unity amongst club members, and give members a stronger voice in the institution. The membership is primarily Aboriginal students from communities across Canada and a small contingent of non-Native members. The supports offered by NASA include: social interaction; a Native student lounge; informal peer support; links between students and faculty, employment services, other native organizations and other clubs at the university; cultural and spiritual celebrations; an Education Resource Centre; and a newsletter.

### ***Alumni Association: Native American Chapter***

The Alumni Association has a Native American Chapter. FNMI Alumni are also involved in the mentorship program developed by the Faculty of Management, which was supported in February 2012 by a donation of \$150,000 from Scotiabank. The mentorship program aims to make the university more accessible to Blackfoot and other FNMI students by bringing FNMI alumni into the university to act as role models for students. It also funds students to visit and mentor Aboriginal junior high and high school students in Lethbridge and on the Blood Reserve.

### ***FNMI Support Group***

At the direction of Deans' Council, an FNMI support group was formed in 2008 with broad representation from faculties and relevant offices.<sup>8</sup> Its purpose was to support the Coordinator of the Native Student Advisor Office, develop a comprehensive sense of FNMI-related academic programs and supports taking place across the university, and provide a forum coordinating services. Over the last two years, the group sought to identify gaps and opportunities for future activities, with the goal of bringing them to the attention of the university.

## ***Financial Support***

### ***Barriers***

In the Aboriginal Student Support Research Project, students cited a lack of financial resources as a major obstacle to their successfully completing programs at the University of Lethbridge.<sup>9</sup> Although a large number of students receive Federal Government or band funding, this funding is inadequate to meet the growing needs of students and the increasing numbers of students seeking post secondary education.<sup>10</sup> Some students, moreover, receive no band funding, making access to university even more difficult. The result is many Aboriginal students are either “under-funded or left completely dependent upon loans, part-time work and institutional support programs to eke out a subsistence existence.”<sup>11</sup> Students with families often face very challenging situations when unforeseen events eat into already very limited financial resources, leaving them with insufficient funds to provide for basic needs. For students with families, access to childcare also presents a significant challenge.<sup>12</sup> In the University of Lethbridge approximately 25 percent of Aboriginal students require extra funds on occasion to address dire financial circumstances, a number comparable to that encountered in other universities.<sup>13</sup>

ROSS and the Native Student Advising Office have made some progress in addressing these kinds of challenges. They have sought and obtained to establish a food bank at the Students Union, a food cupboard attached to the NASA lounge, and emergency bursaries and food cards for students in urgent

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<sup>8</sup> A membership list for 2011-2012 is included in Appendix A.

<sup>9</sup> Pace-Crosschild et al, *Aboriginal Student Support Research Project*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Kachuck Rosenbluth, *Indigenous Issues in Post- Secondary Education*, 18-19.

<sup>11</sup> Holmes, *Redressing the Balance*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Pace-Crosschild et al, *Aboriginal Student Support Research Project* and Lavers and Ferguson, *FNMI Potentials*. As of 2006, only 4 percent of universities operate dedicated childcare facilities, 13 percent stating that they help Aboriginal students obtain childcare on-campus or elsewhere. Holmes, *Redressing the Balance*, 39.

<sup>13</sup> Lavers and Ferguson, *FNMI Potentials*, 2. Our conversations with the Native Centres at Mount Royal, SAIT, and the Universities of Calgary, Victoria and VIU all indicated that approximately 25% of their Aboriginal students require emergency support on occasion.

need.<sup>14</sup> But, as with most universities, funding from outside sources cannot be counted on as a stable source of continuous support.<sup>15</sup>

For many U of L Aboriginal students housing and/or transportation issues continue to be a significant barrier.<sup>16</sup> Other universities typically address this through designated student housing (usually limited to a small number of single and family units) and/or direct help in finding accommodation. Finding accommodation for Aboriginal students in the city of Lethbridge, however, is notoriously difficult.<sup>17</sup> It has been suggested, therefore, that in addition to designating some units in student residences for Aboriginal students, the university should have available a number of gas cards and hotel vouchers that students could access in emergency situations.<sup>18</sup>

### **Scholarship, Awards and Bursary Programs**

Given the financial challenges mentioned above, university and private student support programs (scholarships and bursaries) can make a great difference to FNMI students. Accordingly, a sizable number of scholarship, award, and bursary programs targeted for them have been created.<sup>19</sup> In 2011 approximately 17 percent of the Aboriginal student population at the University of Lethbridge applied for awards, 63 percent of whom declared financial need. Although not large, that number is not significantly lower than the general student population where 20 percent applied for awards, 61 percent of whom declared financial need.<sup>20</sup> About 40 percent of the Aboriginal students who applied were successful in getting funding (7 percent of the total Aboriginal Student Population or 28 students). To try to spread the resources as much as possible, in situations where no qualified applicants remain in the pool and the award or scholarship permits, the Scholarship and Finance Department and Student Award Committee allot the scholarship or award to the next most qualified student. To assist Aboriginal students in applying for awards the Native Advisor Office conducts workshops designed to encourage and facilitate applications.

Aboriginal students also have access to University of Lethbridge Emergency Funding (open to all students). Students may apply for such funding once per semester and to receive it must fill in a budget and explain the nature of the emergency encountered. Emergency funding is also available through the Students Union and, in some cases, band offices. An FNMI endowment fund targeted to emergencies was established in 2008 by the FNMI Support Group and has the potential to establish a further sustainable source of funding for emergency bursaries for Aboriginal students. All of the above notwithstanding, funding for emergencies remains a challenge for FNMI students at our institution.

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<sup>14</sup> These *additional* supports were achieved through the collaborative efforts of Leslie Lavers, Elizabeth Ferguson, and Rhonda Crow. Lavers and Ferguson, *FNMI Potentials*, 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Moving Forward*, 17. The *bursaries* for examples funded by Urban Aboriginal Strategies ended after four years and replacement funding has not been secured.

<sup>16</sup> Pace-Crosschild et al, *Aboriginal Student Support Research Project*, Lavers and Ferguson, *FNMI Potentials*, and Nicol, *Notes from First Nations Task Force Meetings*.

<sup>17</sup> "Housing providers and landlords are reluctant to rent to Aboriginal community members," *Lethbridge Urban Aboriginal Community Needs Assessment*, 31.

<sup>18</sup> *Notes from the FNMI Support Group Meeting*, January 11, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> A list of University of Lethbridge awards available specifically for FNMI students is included in Appendix B.

<sup>20</sup> Although both groups of students report financial need, non-Aboriginal students typically are in a somewhat better situation in having more reliable access to some combination of part-time or summer jobs, scholarships, financial support from their families, and government and/or private loans, Holmes, *Redressing the Balance*, 12.

## Building for the Future

The University of Lethbridge can take pride in the range of initiatives related to Aboriginal peoples it has developed and undertaken over the years. In so doing, it has foreshadowed many of the recommendations and best practices from recent government and university reports addressing the area.<sup>21</sup> However, discernible gaps and incongruences have emerged over the years.

The U of L must take the next steps to keep faith with its original vision and the commitments outlined in the Principles of its current Strategic Plan to “value our relationship with FNMI peoples” and to work collaboratively in developing “programs and partnerships that are relevant, available to them” and that “continue to meet their needs.”<sup>22</sup> The gaps and incongruences identified<sup>23</sup> include the following:

- **Visible, Culturally Distinctive Space:** There is no visible, culturally distinctive place of protocol on campus, appropriate for smudging and ceremony and large enough for Elders, FNMI students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members to gather and celebrate their culture and traditions. There is also no university-wide plan to raise the profile of FNMI peoples in buildings and spaces across campus by displaying Aboriginal art works and cultural artifacts (for example, Blackfoot flag).
- **Elders:** FNMI students have requested a more extensive Elders program that will enable them, in a culturally appropriate venue, to meet with Elders on a more consistent basis to receive cultural, emotional, and spiritual support.
- **Tutors and Peer Support:** FNMI students have also requested greater access to tutors, particularly in academic writing, math and science, and a quiet place to meet and work with them.<sup>24</sup> Students have also asked for a formal Peer Support Program that pairs students with a peer who can offer them direction, assistance, and advice on available support services.
- **Coordination:** Currently FNMI related programs, research and creative activity, supports, and initiatives are spread across campus, making it difficult for participants to communicate with one another and share ideas, resources, best practices, and so forth. While such dispersion helps spread awareness of FNMI cultures throughout the academic community, the university needs to consider how it can more effectively coordinate them, preventing unnecessary duplication and promoting cooperation and partnerships.
- **Communication:** The extensive range of expertise and knowledge at the university in Aboriginal education and research and creative activity deserves to be better promoted and celebrated. We need to be more assertive in publicizing our knowledge and expertise in this area and in providing greater opportunities for intercultural dialogue and conversation. This will boost recruitment and university advancement, but will also promote greater awareness and understanding of Blackfoot and other FNMI cultures in the city of Lethbridge and surrounding communities.
- **Financial Support:** There must be a more stable source of continuous funding for FNMI students if we are to continue to meet the needs of students in immediate crisis and support their retention and academic success. The university also needs to find ways to address issues related to transportation, housing, and daycare. Finally, we need to develop more FNMI scholarships and awards.

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<sup>21</sup> A list of the reports consulted in writing this document is included in the Bibliography.

<sup>22</sup> *University of Lethbridge Strategic Plan*, 2009-2013

<sup>23</sup> Pace-Crosschild et al, *Aboriginal Student Support Research Project*, Lavers and Ferguson, *FNMI Potentials*, and *Notes from the FNMI Support Group Meetings*. Our consultations confirmed the gaps and suggestions identified in these documents, as well as raising others.

<sup>24</sup> Currently students use the FNMI lounge for such activities thereby restricting the opportunities of other students to meet and socialize between classes.

## Development Process and Consultations

In September 2011, President Mike Mahon asked Professor Leroy Little Bear, Red Crow Community College Vice-President Academic Roy Weasel Fat, and Professor Jane O'Dea, supported by Laurel Corbiere, Senior Advisor to the President, to develop an overarching strategy that would create support for FNMI students, faculty, staff, and community members at the University of Lethbridge, including exploring the desirability and level of support for establishing an FNMI Centre/Gathering Place on campus. In doing so, the team was asked to consult widely with Blackfoot, other FNMI, university, and local communities as available and appropriate. The consultations took the following forms: discussions with stakeholders; visits to Native Centres in Alberta and British Columbia; and examination of relevant government and university reports.

### *Discussion with Stakeholders*

The team met with a wide range of relevant personnel from the Blackfoot, other FNMI, university, and local communities,<sup>25</sup> and explored and discussed: the original vision of the university with respect to Blackfoot and other Aboriginal peoples; FNMI related academic programs, research and creative activity, and student support services; gaps or incongruences; and ideas and suggestions as to how gaps or incongruences might be addressed, including the role an FNMI Centre or Gathering Place might play.

The overwhelming consensus was that, although the university could take pride in its many initiatives related to Blackfoot and other FNMI peoples, gaps and incongruences had occurred that needed to be addressed. There was unanimous support for creating a gathering place at the University as the logical next step in the historic relationship the University holds with Blackfoot and other FNMI peoples. It was agreed that such a centre would go a long way towards addressing gaps and incongruences that had emerged over the years.

### *Visits to Native Centres in Alberta and British Columbia*

Members of the team visited the Iniskim Centre at Mount Royal University, the Native Centre at the University of Calgary, and the Chinook Centre in SAIT, the First Peoples House in the University of Victoria, and Shq'apthut in the University of Vancouver Island. Among the items explored and discussed were: Aboriginal student numbers at the university; visibility, cultural appropriateness, and layout of the centres; Elders and cultural advisors programs provided; celebratory and ceremonial events held; academic and general student supports provided; and the educational role of the centre. A chart specifying the layouts, resources, and services provided at these centres, enabling comparison between them and what is currently offered at the University of Lethbridge, is included in Appendix C.

In addition, special teleconference and videoconference meetings were held with: Shauna Cunningham (Director of the University of Calgary Native Centre; Paul Michel (Director of the Native Centre, University of Northern British Columbia); and Laurie McLaren (Executive Director, Office of Aboriginal Initiatives, Nipissing University).

### *Relevant Government and University Reports*

Over the last decade, in response to the economic and demographic challenges facing Canada, a number of summits and conferences have been held across the country. These events have produced some important reports that chart recommended directions and exemplary practices for institutions seeking to increase participation rates among Aboriginal youth and to support their academic pursuits. A list of the reports and other documents examined is included in the Bibliography.

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<sup>25</sup> A list of the personnel consulted and dates when the consultation occurred is included in Appendix C.

## Recommendations

### **Recommendation #1**

#### **Create a Niitsitapi Gathering Place on campus**

##### **Vision**

The Gathering Place will create a welcoming “home away from home” for Aboriginal students, faculty and staff, where their cultural identity is recognized, celebrated, and affirmed. It will provide a designated, culturally appropriate space for ceremony, smudging, and celebration, an inviting, supportive on-campus site for Blackfoot and other Aboriginal peoples to gather together in community.

In keeping with First Nations tradition, the Gathering Place will acknowledge, respect, and honour the values, history, customs, and culture of the Blackfoot speaking nations on whose territorial lands our university resides.<sup>26</sup> But it will be open and welcoming to all FNMI peoples, asking them to respect the protocols of the territory while also supporting and honouring the diversity of values and beliefs among Aboriginal communities. Non-Aboriginal people from the University community and from the City of Lethbridge and surrounding communities will be welcome to participate in creating a nurturing, co-operative learning environment, where all will learn from one another. It will only be asked that those who enter the Gathering Place show respect (Innakotsiyyinni) for Blackfoot culture and protocols and for each other.<sup>27</sup>

##### **Purpose: Students**

The Gathering Place will provide a culturally familiar, safe space on campus where Blackfoot and other FNMI students, some of whom may not feel part of the mainstream institutional culture, can be themselves. Here, they will feel free to celebrate their culture and traditions without judgment or prejudice. It will provide a place to meet with Elders and to share stories, teachings, and wisdom. It will be a venue for speaking Blackfoot and other Aboriginal languages,<sup>28</sup> a dwelling where learning and education can comfortably occur through interaction with others.

For students away from their home environments, it will foster a vibrant sense of cultural community, where students can visit with each other.<sup>29</sup> Cultural activities and events appropriate for *all* students will take place at the Gathering Place. These will instill pride in heritage and inspire leadership by providing Aboriginal students the opportunity to demonstrate their culture to others.<sup>30</sup>

The Gathering Place will promote academic excellence. It will create an empowering environment where students can study and explore new knowledge together, where informally and though formal peer support programs,<sup>31</sup> they can support one another in managing the everyday pressures of student life and negotiating the university system. It will provide a designated study space with computers, and a quiet space where students can access a tutor, an alumni mentor, or additional time with an instructor in an

<sup>26</sup> *Moving Forward*, 16. A list and description of *Niitsitapi* (Blackfoot) values are included in Appendix D.

<sup>27</sup> A sign with wording to this effect is in the Entrance Hall, *First Peoples House*, University of Victoria

<sup>28</sup> Kachuck Rosenbluth, *Indigenous Issues in Post Secondary Education*, 24.

<sup>29</sup> Non-local FNMI students cited “feelings of isolation and lack of support “ as primary barriers to their success while studying at the University of Lethbridge. Pace-Crosschild et al, *Aboriginal Student Support Research Project*, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Lavers and Ferguson, *FNMI Potentials*, 7. Also, Kachuck Rosenbluth, *Indigenous Issues in Post Secondary Education*, 25.

<sup>31</sup> UNBC has an effective, relatively inexpensive yet highly successful Peer Support Program that could be used as a model in the creation of such a structure.

informal setting.<sup>32</sup> The Gathering Place will thereby help students achieve the highest educational ideals and aspirations.

Recruitment and retention is another area to be addressed. The Gathering Place will provide cultural knowledge and expertise, community liaison, and advice to those programs designed to increase the admission, retention, and completion rates of Blackfoot and other FNMI students. It will support and assist the Native Student Advisor Office in its efforts to provide support and resources in areas related to finances, housing, transportation, child-care, health, and well-being,<sup>33</sup> including seeking external funding to support them.<sup>34</sup>

### **Purpose: Education**

The Gathering Place will play an important educational role within the broader academic community by fostering appreciation and respect for FNMI heritage throughout the university and beyond. It will promote more informed knowledge and understanding of Blackfoot values, history, culture, and customs, and a greater awareness of, and sensitivity to, the diversity of FNMI cultures.

It will facilitate the infusion of Blackfoot and other Aboriginal perspectives and content in courses and programs where appropriate, provide support, and guide faculties seeking to develop and deliver (alone or in collaboration with Aboriginal colleges) undergraduate and graduate course offerings or programs relating to FNMI peoples.

It will encourage culturally sensitive, more effective pedagogy by offering activities that encourage and assist instructors in managing cross-cultural conversations, leading to respectful, supportive and welcoming learning environments that instill a sense of belonging for all learners.<sup>35</sup>

Professional development opportunities in cross-cultural awareness<sup>36</sup> for faculty and staff, offered by the Gathering Place, will assist in making the university feel safe and comfortable for everyone. This will help foster among Aboriginal students a more confident sense of belonging to the broader institution.

### **Purpose: Research and Creative Activity**

Research will continue to take place in the faculties, but the Gathering Place will facilitate and promote research and creative activity related to FNMI peoples by offering guidance and support in developing research protocols and liaising with cultural communities.

It will offer research seminars and speaker series that celebrate and disseminate Aboriginal education and research, and will keep the community informed of developments in “Aboriginal Country.”

The Gathering Place will host dialogues, cultural events, and other activities that encourage personal, social, intellectual, and cultural interactions between Blackfoot and other FNMI peoples, the University, and the City of Lethbridge.

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<sup>32</sup> Lavers and Ferguson, *FNMI Potentials*, 12.

<sup>33</sup> All of the areas cited above have been identified as additional costs required to truly serve the needs of Aboriginal Students. See *Moving Forward*, 17. Holmes, *Redressing the Balance*, 27-29. Also, Statistics Canada, *A Literature Review of Factors that Support Successful Transitions by Aboriginal People*, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Thirty one percent of Native Centres receive some dedicated funding from external sources (from Government, private sector or Aboriginal organizations). Holmes, *Redressing the Balance*, 39. The University of Lethbridge could greatly enhance its ability to address the areas mentioned above by, in coordination with University Advancement, hiring a researcher/proposal writer familiar with Aboriginal grants and initiatives and with demonstrated experience in securing such funding.

<sup>35</sup> Association of Canadian Deans of Education, *Accord on Indigenous Education*, 5. Also, Nicol, *Notes from First Nations Task Force Meetings*.

<sup>36</sup> A number of universities have instituted such training programs for faculty and staff. Holmes, *Redressing the Balance*, 29.



**Purpose: Coordination and Communication**

The Gathering Place is not intended to consolidate existing academic programs or student support services in one central area. Situating programs and services pertaining to Aboriginal students in various locations across the university has a positive intercultural impact.<sup>37</sup> As a central *locus* of FNMI related activities in the University, however, it will facilitate effective coordination of academic<sup>38</sup> and support activities throughout the university.

The Gathering Place will act as a central communication and referral site<sup>39</sup> for matters relating to Aboriginal programs, research, and student support services. It will share information on campus events and activities, thereby encouraging cross-faculty cooperation in Aboriginal programs, research and creative activity partnerships, and cooperative initiatives related to improving and enhancing student support.

A visible, recognizable Niitsitapi site on campus, it will serve as a welcoming centre for visitors to Nato'ohkotok (Medicine Rock), and the traditional territory on which it resides.

**Purpose: Recruitment and University Advancement**

In consultation with University Advancement and ROSS, the Gathering Place will support Aboriginal recruitment and the advancement of the institution by publicizing and promoting the range of academic programs, research and creative activities, and support services relating to Blackfoot and other FNMI peoples available at the U of L. It will particularly reach out to Blackfoot and other Aboriginal elementary, middle, and high-school students, to show them the possibilities and benefits of a post-secondary education and enable them to see themselves in a university environment.<sup>40</sup>

**Rationale: U of L Tradition**

In his book *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada*, John Ralston Saul writes:

“What we are today has been inspired as much by four centuries of life with the indigenous civilizations as by four centuries of immigrations.

When I dig around the roots of how we imagine ourselves, how we govern, how we live together in communities – how we treat one another when we are not being stupid – what I find is deeply aboriginal.”<sup>41</sup>

The University of Lethbridge has a similar basis for its dealings with Aboriginal peoples. It has always recognized the contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canada. In honour of this recognition, the time is right for the University of Lethbridge to reaffirm its commitment to Native American education and to the continuing evolution of an environment conducive to all students by taking the next step: establishing a Gathering Place for Blackfoot and other FNMI Peoples and coordinating its many Native American education programs.

The university is proud of being among the first universities in Canada to include a major in Native American Studies among its Liberal Education components. It can also take pride in its extensive range of innovative academic programs and research and creative activity related to FNMI peoples and its active student services support programs.

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<sup>37</sup> Kachuck Rosenbluth, *Indigenous Issues in Post- Secondary Education*, 25.

<sup>38</sup> Professor Leroy Little Bear has used the Tipi as a conceptual model for the development of Native American programs in the University of Lethbridge. A copy of his conceptual model document is included in Appendix E.

<sup>39</sup> Many students reported that they would like to see supports for Aboriginal students located in one central area. Pace-Crosschild et al, *Aboriginal Student Support Research Project*, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Kachuck Rosenbluth, *Indigenous Issues in Post- Secondary Education*, 11. Holmes, *Redressing the Balance*, 18.

<sup>41</sup> Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada*, 3.

The Gathering Place is the logical next step if the University of Lethbridge is to maintain its legitimacy and preeminence as a destination for people seeking programs and services of this kind nationally and internationally. Simply put, it is the right thing to do, a visible symbol of our respect for the land, history, and people who have been here for centuries. Creating it will send an important signal that Blackfoot and other FNMI students belong at the University of Lethbridge and are valued, respected, and supported in whatever educational goals they pursue.

### ***Rationale: Supporting Our Communities***

Other universities and colleges recognize the importance of creating spaces dedicated to Aboriginal students, as shown in the growing number of Native Centers and Aboriginal Houses in institutions across Canada. Seventy percent of the 75 Canadian university respondents in *Redressing the Balance* have an Aboriginal Student Centre, 63 percent of which have been established within the last 15 years.<sup>42</sup> The centres range from small student lounges to larger “gathering places.”<sup>43</sup>

In British Columbia, gathering places are particularly common in its public, post-secondary institutions, due to Government investment of \$13.6-million. Gathering places like the First Peoples House in the University of Victoria or Shq’apthut in Vancouver Island University have strong Elder programs that move well beyond “closing the gap” discourse and foster understanding, appreciation, and respect for FNMI heritage.

It is exactly this kind of gathering place that the University of Lethbridge has the potential to create. Bordering Canada’s largest Aboriginal reserves, and close to Aboriginal communities in southern Alberta, the University of Lethbridge has access to an exceptional number of Elders and knowledge holders.

But *it is all about relationship*. Creating a welcoming, supportive gathering place on campus will enable us to invite Elders and community members to join our scholarly community and, *in a respectful, culturally appropriate space and context*, share their wisdom, values, and ways of knowing within and beyond the university.

In so doing, the historic educational relationship with Blackfoot and other Aboriginal communities first forged in the collaborative creation of Native American Studies will be reinvigorated, strengthened, and reaffirmed. This will pave the way for new collaborative initiatives that seal the reputation of our institution as an educational exemplar of intercultural, scholarly partnership and cooperation.

### ***Rationale: Aboriginal Demographics***

Based on the 2006 Canadian Census, 3.8 percent of the Canadian population is of Aboriginal ancestry.<sup>44</sup> Aboriginal youth population is growing at three times the national average,<sup>45</sup> with 25,000 Aboriginal Students reaching the age of 18 each year. <sup>46</sup> Yet there is an enrolment loss (in post secondary education)

<sup>42</sup> Native Centres or Gathering Places have been established at most of the well known universities across Canada including: UBC, Vancouver Island University, UNBC, Simon Fraser, Universities of Victoria, Calgary, Regina, Saskatchewan, Brandon, Manitoba, Winnipeg, Carleton, Lakehead, Ottawa, Queen’s, Toronto, Trent, Winsor, York, McGill, Concordia, Chicoutimi, New Brunswick, PEI, Dalhousie and Memorial. Holmes, *Redressing the Balance*, 39 and 44-48.

<sup>43</sup> In general, native centres tend to focus primarily on student support and have very limited (if any) Elders programs. Although providing support for students is an integral component of gathering places, they usually have a broader educational mandate—to educate the university as a whole about aboriginal life and culture and to facilitate a vibrant link with local Aboriginal communities. To accomplish this gathering places typically have strong Elder programs as well as ceremonial spaces large enough (approximately 100-120 people) to invite local communities. The distinction is not iron clad, however, since some First Nations Centres, UNBC for example, functioning as gathering places with extensive Elders Programs and large ceremonial meeting places.

<sup>44</sup> Government of Canada. 2008. Cited in the *Accord on Indigenous Education*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Moving Forward*, 9.

<sup>46</sup> Kachuck Rosenbluth, *Indigenous Issues in Post-Secondary Education*, 7.

of 17,000 of those students annually. One in five Canadians get a post secondary degree, while only one in 33 Aboriginals do so.<sup>47</sup>

Faced with these statistics, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) has identified Aboriginal Education as one of its most significant priorities,<sup>48</sup> and a number of summits, and conferences have been held to address it, resulting in some important and valuable reports that chart recommended directions and exemplary practices for institutions seeking to increase participation rates among Aboriginal youth. The *Accord on Indigenous Education* published by the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE) in 2010, provides a strong framework for its signatories to “work together to advance the educational purposes and values of Indigenous communities and people.”<sup>49</sup> The Report on summit participants’ views and recommendations in *Moving Forward: National Working Summit on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education (2010)*, and the Final Report of the Queen’s University conference, *Indigenous Issues in Post-Secondary Education: Building on Best Practices* (2011) both address the underrepresentation of Aboriginal students in post-secondary education. The latter report perhaps summarizes it best:

“It is ironic, if not perverse, that just as Canadians are becoming increasingly concerned about future labour shortages, there is a large and growing population of young Aboriginal people who could be an invaluable source of workers to meet Canada’s future labour market needs. Nevertheless they are not as engaged in the workforce as they might be because they lack the required education.”<sup>50</sup>

Accentuating the need to work together to improve the lives of First Nation students, *Nurturing the Learning Spirit of First Nation Students* (2012), urges:

“the development of an effective education system . . . properly funded, respectful of First Nation language, culture and identity and able to provide opportunities for life choices and options, including making a positive contribution to the community and participating in the Canadian and Global economy.”<sup>51</sup>

All of the documents cited above emphasize the importance of creating on campus respectful and welcoming learning environments, including providing culturally supportive spaces where Aboriginal students can feel at home. Recognizing that such spaces should not be the only place on campus where Aboriginal students feel they belong, however, they also recommend that institutions find ways to incorporate local Aboriginal knowledge and culture for the purposes of developing programs and services for Aboriginal students and sharing Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives with the broader campus community.<sup>52</sup> Finally, they point to the substantive costs entailed in truly serving the needs of Aboriginal students, acknowledging that financial support in many cases needs to go well beyond tuition fees and include necessary expenses related to living costs, travel to and from community, daycare etc., costs most institutions lack the long-term, sustainable funding to address.<sup>53</sup>

The University of Lethbridge has already gone a long way towards meeting the recommendations and best practices listed above. But we cannot rest on our laurels. There is still much to be done if we are to be successful in attracting, retaining, and graduating increased numbers of Blackfoot and other Aboriginal students.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>48</sup> *Moving Forward*, 7.

<sup>49</sup> Association of Canadian Deans of Education, *Accord on Indigenous Education*, 4.

<sup>50</sup> Kachuck Rosenbluth, *Indigenous Issues in Post-Secondary Education*, 7.

<sup>51</sup> *Nurturing the Learning Spirit of First Nation Students*, vii.

<sup>52</sup> *Moving Forward*, 7.

<sup>53</sup> *Moving Forward*, 17.

A Gathering Place will enhance our demonstrated ability to develop innovative, culturally responsive programming. It can assist Education students in acquiring the cultural background to offer culturally responsive tutorials in priority areas, such as academic writing, math, and science. Doing so will further the academic success of Aboriginal students seeking such support, while enabling Education students to acquire valuable pedagogical knowledge and experience.<sup>54</sup>

The Gathering Place will be a catalyst for developing co-op type programs in areas related to academic support, which could be of mutual benefit to all students. Working collaboratively with U of L counselling programs, the Gathering Place can offer co-op opportunities that provide culturally responsive career counseling to Blackfoot and other FNMI students in elementary, middle, and high schools. It can address early intervention in schooling.

The Gathering Place could serve as a community locus where—supported by Elders, alumni, and community members—university administration, faculty, and staff could visit and share with parents information about the university. This sharing can emphasize:

- The importance and viability of post-secondary education.
- The financial and other supports in place to facilitate it, including the presence of a welcoming home away from home where their cultural traditions will be practiced and respected.
- The important role parents can play in encouraging their children to have and pursue educational goals and aspirations from the earliest beginnings of schooling.

Creating a Niitsitapi Gathering Place at the University of Lethbridge will boost the recruitment and retention of FNMI students, a significant and underrepresented demographic in post-secondary education. It will enable our university to encourage greater participation of Blackfoot and other FNMI students in post-secondary education, thereby playing our part in addressing what has been identified as a “compelling national issue.”<sup>55</sup>

### ***Rationale: Tracking FNMI Student Retention and Success***

The central coordination and communication role of the Gathering Place will help the university more accurately track retention and success rates among Aboriginal students and the efficacy of supports and activities.<sup>56</sup> That, and the more visible presence of Blackfoot and other Aboriginal cultures on campus, will lend greater credibility to the university’s efforts to secure sustainable, long term funding to serve Aboriginal needs and to join with other institutions in lobbying for such funds.

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<sup>54</sup> Alberta Education has recently included among its requirements for teacher certification, knowledge of FNMI history and culture and the ability to develop and use culturally responsive pedagogies.

<sup>55</sup> *Moving Forward*, 7.

<sup>56</sup> Although *A Literature Review of Factors that Support Successful Transitions by Aboriginal People* suggests that few supports and structures are well evaluated (p. 41), UVIC provides an interesting evaluation of its LE, NONET program in Cassels, *UVIC Aboriginal Student Strategy*. It is assumed that the presence of the Gathering Place in the University of Lethbridge would further these kinds of evaluations.

## Recommendation #2

### **Establish an Elders Program in the Niitsitapi Gathering Place that will provide more consistent access to Elders for students, faculty, and staff in the University of Lethbridge**

“Elders are a key cornerstone of first nations societies. Aboriginal people have always had the tradition of elders guiding their communities and societies.”<sup>57</sup>

Within Indigenous communities, Elders are a valuable resource and hold a place of great honour. They are considered the foundation of the community and the glue that keeps it together.<sup>58</sup> The living embodiment of “history books”<sup>59</sup> they serve as “knowledge holders” or “knowledge keepers” charged with the responsibility of preserving and passing on the sacred stories, songs, language, culture, and traditions of Aboriginal peoples. Each Elder has his or her own knowledge and skill handed down through many generations. If he or she cannot assist in a particular area they will often refer people to another Elder with the requisite knowledge and expertise.<sup>60</sup> Blackfoot Elders, for example, have expertise in the following areas:<sup>61</sup>

- Traditional Story Telling
- Pre-Tribal History
- Post-Tribal History
- *Niitsitapi* Ecology (plants, animals, and places)
- *Niitsitapi* Philosophies
- Symbolism in *Niitsitapi* Artistic Traditions
- *Niisti’powahsin* Linguistic Analysis
- Political Organization and Leadership
- Family and Kinship Systems
- Gender Relations
- Childrearing Practices
- Traditional Songs
- Repatriation Negotiations
- Social and Spiritual Protocol
- Conflict Resolution and Law
- *Niitsitapi* Economic Systems

Elders’ Programs at Native Centres or Gathering Places generally aim to support and mentor students. They also build a climate at the university that “recognizes and respects the culture and heritage of FNMI students so that they may experience increased self esteem and a strong healthy identity.”<sup>62</sup> Describing the presence, wisdom, and counsel of Elders as “the mainstay not only for students but for the university as a whole,” the First Nations University of Canada portrays Elders’ knowledge of First Nations’ traditions, culture, and spirituality as “a unique support service . . . reinforcing our respect for and understanding of the Creator’s role in our lives.”<sup>63</sup> In addition to providing positive role models for Aboriginal students, Elders programs encourage them to become a part of the wider university community while “remaining

<sup>57</sup> William Lindsay, Director, Office for Aboriginal People SFU, in *Elders bring cultural wisdom to SFU campuses*.

<sup>58</sup> *What is Elders Voices?* University of Victoria.

<sup>59</sup> Andy Black Water, in *Presentation to Education 3603*, University of Lethbridge.

<sup>60</sup> The *Eminent Scholar* designation at Red Crow Community College is specifically designed to recognize the range of knowledge and expertise held by Blackfoot Elders. Similarly, UNBC has created the designation *Aboriginal Knowledge Holder* to recognize and honour the traditional knowledge and expertise held by Elders. Videoconference with Paul Michel, Director, First Nations Centre UNBC, March, 2012

<sup>61</sup> Roy Weasel Fat, *Kiipaitapiyisinnoni: Our Way of Life*.

<sup>62</sup> *Elders Program*, Brandon University. Holmes, *Redressing the Balance*, 116.

<sup>63</sup> *Elders*, First Nations’ University of Canada. Holmes, *Redressing the Balance*, 108

grounded in traditional values.”<sup>64</sup> The presence of Elders is always viewed as benefiting the community as a whole and not just people of Aboriginal descent.

The Elders Program in the Niitsitapi Gathering Place will provide the following:

- Practice and understanding of Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) values in the University community.
- More informed knowledge and understanding of Blackfoot history, culture and customs, and greater awareness of, and sensitivity to, the diversity of FNMI cultures.
- Support for Blackfoot and other Aboriginal languages.
- Leadership in ceremony, protocols, and celebrations for Blackfoot and other FNMI students, faculty and staff.
- Guidance to university faculty and staff re protocols and traditional customs.
- Support for Blackfoot and other Aboriginal learners by offering traditional knowledge and spiritual guidance.
- Encouragement and guidance for students in need (including conducting ceremonies).
- Spiritual advice for students, faculty, and staff.
- Support, advice, and guidance to the Native American Students Association (NASA).
- Dialogues and talking circles.<sup>65</sup>
- Mediation.
- Support, advice, and guidance in curriculum and program developments relating to Aboriginal peoples.
- Support, advice, and guidance for infusing Blackfoot and other Aboriginal perspectives and content in courses and programs.
- Assistance in teaching and instruction.
- Professional development in cultural awareness.
- Advice and guidance to the university on research and creative activity protocols pertaining to Blackfoot and other FNMI cultures.
- Advice and guidance on integrating Blackfoot and other FNMI cultures on campus. For example, the installation of cultural artifacts in buildings across campus.
- Liaison with the Blackfoot community.

Rather than designating particular Elders as “Elders-in-residence,” the Gathering Place will provide access to a wide range of Elders. It is our recommendation that an Elder be made present and available to students and the university every day during the Fall and Spring semesters, and twice a week during Summer Sessions I and II.

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<sup>64</sup> *Elders bring cultural wisdom to SFU campuses.*

<sup>65</sup> Talking circles give students a chance to take part in an open honest dialogue about their struggles in the post secondary environment and receive feedback from both the Elder involved and their peers, *INAF Programs & Services*, University of Victoria.

### **Rationale**

Elders programs are considered essential in the gathering places more recently established across Canada, legitimizing and ensuring that the cultural knowledge passed on and ceremonies conducted respect traditional standards and are authentic expressions of FNMI culture.<sup>66</sup> The visible presence of Elders on campus also signals the university's commitment to develop and maintain a respectful and collegial relationship between recognized scholars in the academic and FNMI communities. Finally, FNMI students over the last several years have specifically requested a more extensive Elders' program at the University of Lethbridge.<sup>67</sup>

### **Recommendation #3**

#### ***Establish an Aboriginal Education Policy, which is approved by General Faculties Council***<sup>68</sup>

The purpose of the policy will be to provide a university learning environment that:

- Encourages full access, participation, and success for Blackfoot and other FNMI students.
- Supports the presence of Blackfoot and other FNMI students, faculty, staff, Elders, and community members at the university.
- Enriches all aspects of the intellectual and cultural life of the University of Lethbridge through full participation of Blackfoot and other FNMI peoples.

The policy will affirm the university's collective commitment and responsibility to:

- Address equitable access and participation of FNMI people in all faculties, programs, and services associated with the University of Lethbridge.
- Continue to promote the teaching of Blackfoot and other FNMI perspectives and content in courses and programs where appropriate, including developing programs in collaboration with local communities and Aboriginal Colleges.
- Increase the overall awareness of and sensitivity to the diversity of FNMI students and cultures within the University of Lethbridge community.
- Continue to develop initiatives that strive to increase the admission, retention, and completion rates of qualified Blackfoot and other FNMI students at the University of Lethbridge.
- Establish and maintain a Gathering Place for Blackfoot and other FNMI students, faculty, staff, and community members at the university.
- Continue to provide appropriate support services for FNMI students.
- Encourage appropriate research and creative activities related to and with FNMI peoples.
- Provide university activities that encourage personal, social, intellectual, and cultural interactions between Blackfoot and other FNMI peoples, the university, and City of Lethbridge.

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<sup>66</sup> In our videoconference meeting with UNBC, Paul Michel was unequivocal in describing the role of Elders in insuring the legitimacy and correctness of cultural knowledge and practices as "absolutely essential."

<sup>67</sup> Pace-Crosschild et al, *Aboriginal Student Support Research Project, and Lavers and Ferguson, FNMI Potentials*. Students also raised it during our consultations.

<sup>68</sup> We would like to acknowledge the insightful advice and wise counsel offered by Shauna Cunningham, Director of the Native Centre at the University of Calgary, and Paul Michel, Native Centre Director at UNBC in formulating recommendations #3, 4 and 5.

***Rationale***

Our consultations revealed that many people perceived a waning in the university's commitment to FNMI peoples, a sense that it was no longer viewed as a central core priority in the institution. The perception may derive from the dispersal of FNMI related activities across campus. In the absence of a central location and focus, these activities are easily rendered invisible in favour of other more visible needs and priorities, particularly in times of fiscal constraint.

An Aboriginal Education Policy will re-invigorate, strengthen, and reaffirm the university's historic commitment to Aboriginal peoples. The policy will reestablish Aboriginal education as a core priority in the vision of the university that is, like other priorities, subject to budgetary support or constraint if necessary, but acknowledged as a central pillar of our liberal education philosophy.

The policy will also assert and confirm that the University of Lethbridge acknowledges a collective responsibility to support and implement the policy. The range of FNMI related initiatives developed and implemented over the years across faculties and offices have clearly made apparent that collective responsibility in action. Now it is time to identify it as a core value of the institution.

The broad educational purpose of the activities in the policy make it entirely appropriate that it be brought to General Faculties Council, the highest educational authority in the university, for consideration and approval.

***Recommendation #4******Establish a GFC Standing Committee to administer, implement, and monitor the Aboriginal Education Policy***

The Aboriginal Education Policy Standing Committee will administer, implement, and periodically review the Aboriginal Education Policy. It will assume responsibility for coordinating FNMI related programs, research and creative activities, supports, and initiatives across campus. The Committee will discourage unnecessary duplication, share ideas, resources, and best practices, and promote cooperation and partnerships within and outside of the university.

The Standing Committee will be empowered to create sub-committees. Specific sub-committees (with additional membership drawn as appropriate from both the University and FNMI communities) could address specific areas identified in the policy such as:

- Promoting intercultural awareness and understanding.
- Establishing culturally appropriate research protocols and structures designed to disseminate and publicize FNMI related research and creative activity.
- Developing initiatives to improve or enhance FNMI student admission, access, recruitment, and sense of comfort and engagement while attending the university.

Initiatives fostered through these sub-committees will continue to be subject to the relevant and appropriate approval procedures and authority outlined in the governance structures of the university. The Aboriginal Education Policy Standing Committee, however, will serve as an overarching, supportive structure that will bring awareness of such initiatives to university administration, faculty, staff, and students as appropriate, ensure resources are deployed efficiently and effectively, and encourage faculties and offices to work collaboratively. In providing a central locus and culturally appropriate venue for many of the activities outlined above, the Gathering Place and Elders program will play a vitally important role in furthering and enabling the coordinating function of the committee.



The following committee structure is proposed:

- Associate Vice-President Students Services (Chair).
- Special Assistant to the President in Aboriginal Initiatives.
- Director of the Gathering Place.
- One (1) Elder representative.
- Two (2) Aboriginal community representatives (one Blackfoot and one from another FNMI community).
- One (1) Aboriginal alumni member.
- One (1) undergraduate Aboriginal student from the Native American Students Association.
- One (1) Aboriginal student in graduate studies.
- Three (3) faculty members appointed by General Faculties Council.
- Three (3) senior administration members appointed by Dean's Council.

The Standing Committee will meet approximately four times a year and will prepare an annual report on its activities for General Faculties Council. Subcommittees will meet monthly, or as needed.

### ***Rationale***

FNMI related programs, research and creative activity, supports, and activities are currently spread out across campus. They lack an organizing structure that coordinates them, prevents unnecessary duplication, and helps share ideas, best practices, and so forth. The proposed Aboriginal Education Policy Standing Committee will create such a structure, enabling the university to deploy its resources more efficiently and to work together in implementing the core ideas outlined in the Policy.

At the same time, the proposed structure will not impede faculties or offices from initiating and developing programs and support structures, or conducting research and creative activities in areas related to Blackfoot and other FNMI cultures. The Standing Committee can provide faculties and offices with advice, help, and support in pursuing such initiatives..

A Standing Committee also addresses another issue raised during our consultations, the sense that there was no central structure to bring FNMI related initiatives to the attention of the university and recommend appropriate action. The committee brings together the knowledge, expertise, and perspective to problem solve collaboratively and to recommend viable, sustainable actions and projects. The clear identification of such projects may also help to the university secure external funding to support FNMI related activities.

### ***Recommendation #5***

#### ***For the Gathering Place staff, implement administrative structures from other Native centres or gathering places***

The Gathering Place should adopt similar administrative structures to other native centres and gathering places in having a Director to oversee administer and monitor all operations and activities related to the Gathering Place and an Administrative Assistant to help carry them out. The Director will report to the Associate Vice-President Student Services.

In addition, an Elders Advisory Committee should be established to provide guidance and support to the Director in Blackfoot and other FNMI related areas. To consolidate FNMI related support services in one central area, it is also recommended the university consider locating the Native Advising Office in the Gathering Place.

***Rationale***

The scope and purposes envisaged for the Gathering Place necessitate the administrative and advisory structures outlined above. These structures have proven effective in other native centres and gathering places across Canada.

***Recommendation #6******Review the funding for Aboriginal Student Support***

It is recommended that a review be conducted of the financial resources allocated to ROSS and the Native Student Advisor Office to assess if they are adequate to meet the needs of FNMI student support.

***Rationale***

The University has made significant progress in establishing a comprehensive range of support programs to address the physical, academic, emotional, and spiritual needs of FNMI students. Funding for those programs, however, is variable and cannot be counted on as a source of continuous support. To address this issue, and to help develop a more coherent strategy to secure sustainable funding,, a review of financial resources currently allocated to ROSS and the Native Student Advisor office is merited.

***Recommendation #7******Create an appropriate space***

It is recommended that a space be established for the Gathering Place that includes:

- A large social space appropriate for ceremony, celebration and community gatherings.
- An Elders' room.
- A kitchen.
- A study space for students equipped with computers (12).
- A quiet study space for students.
- A board room (small) that when not in use can serve as a tutorial space.
- Administrative staff offices.
- A reception area.

***Rationale***

All of the above are needed to accomplish the purposes of the Gathering Place.

## Next Steps: Fall 2012 – Spring 2013

1. Create Aboriginal Education Policy and Standing Committee and bring both through General Faculties Council (September-October).
2. Assemble Standing Committee and establish agenda of initiatives to be pursued (including establishing sub-committees to address them if appropriate).
3. Initiate phase one of the Elders' program (one or two days a week).
4. Review financial resources allocated to the Native Student Advisor office.
5. Initiate fundraising and design for a new building if appropriate.


We commend the founders of our university for developing, in collaboration with the local community, a prescient, intercultural academic vision that sought to bring together in respectful, educational relationship the Aboriginal (Blackfoot and other FNMI) and university communities.

We also pay tribute to the outstanding efforts of the many people from both communities who sought to sustain and enhance that intercultural vision over the years. It is our hope that all have heard their voices, thoughts, and aspirations reflected in the pages above.

Respectfully submitted,

  
 Jane O'Dea, University of Lethbridge

May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012  
 Date

  
 Leroy Little Bear, University of Lethbridge

MAY 23, 2012  
 Date

  
 Roy Weasel Fat, Red Crow College

May 23, 2012  
 Date

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## Appendix A: FNMI Support Group Membership (2011-2012)

Name	Department
Amelinckx, Andrea	Management
Bromley-Wadsworth, Tisha	ROSS – Recruitment and Student Life
Campbell, Cathy	Education
Crow, Rhonda	Management
Ferguson, Elizabeth	ROSS – Registrar's Office
Glover, Andrea	Library
Goodstriker, Jessica	Arts & Science – FNTF
Harnett, Tanya	Native American Studies, Co-Chair
Haughton, Ashley	Arts & Science – Advising
Hogue, Michelle	FNTF Coordinator
Kincaid, John	ROSS – Recruitment & Student Life
Lamb, Marilyn	Health Sciences
Lavers, Leslie	ROSS – Registrar's Office
Leishman, Carma	ROSS – Recruitment & Student Life
Lore, Becky	ROSS – Scholarships & Finance
Mellow, Muriel	Arts & Science
Miller, Alice	ROSS – Admissions
Tailfeathers, Johnel ( <b>Retired</b> )	Education
Tanaka, Pat	ROSS – Career & Employment Services
Williams, Barbara	ROSS – Counselling Services

## Appendix B: FNMI Awards

To apply for awards that have an application deadline, students must complete the on-line application for Scholarships located on the Bridge (<https://www.uleth.ca/bridge/>).

### *Entrance or Continuing Undergraduate (any degree program)*

#### **Zella Dague Forsyth Memorial Award (Dr. Howard Forsyth)**

- First awarded in 2002: 12 recipients (\$42,500)
- Value: \$5,000 or two at \$2,500
- A full-time continuing student admitted to any program. Must be a registered member of the Blood or Peigan Nation. Academic achievement. Financial need. A one-page essay relating the obstacles overcome in life.
- Application deadline: May 1

#### **Métis Scholar Award (Métis Education Foundation and University of Lethbridge)**

- First awarded in 2012: 6 recipient (\$15,000)
- Value: \$2,500 Number: 6
- Full-time undergraduate students. Canadian citizen, Métis heritage. Financial need. Minimum GPA of 2.3 in the immediate previous semester at U of L. Statement of experience with the Métis community.
- Application required by January 12, apply at the Scholarships and Student Finance Office.

#### **Colleen Klein Scholarship for First Nations Students (University of Lethbridge)**

- First awarded in 2003: 10 recipients (\$9,500)
- Value: \$1,000 (two payments of \$500 each)
- Full-time continuing student in any degree program (minimum 60 percent course load). Academic achievement.
- Application deadline: May 1

#### **Alice Takacs Achievement Award (Alice Takacs)**

- First awarded in 2010: 1 recipient (\$1,000)
- Value: \$1,000
- Full-time continuing students in the First Nations' Transition Program who have completed the first semester of the program. Academic achievement (all actual grades included in the calculation). Positive contribution and involvement in class.
- Application not required, nominated by committee.

#### **Mat Hanrahan Memorial First Nations, Métis and Inuit Bursary (Anita Hanrahan)**

- First awarded in 2011: 3 recipients (\$2,000)
- Value: \$1,000
- First Nations, Métis or Inuit students continuing in any undergraduate degree program. Financial need.
- Application deadline: May 1

#### **Christine Miller Memorial Award (Patricia Chuchryk and Christine Miller)**

- First awarded in 2004: 4 recipients (\$2,000)
- Value: \$500
- Single parent enrolled in any degree program. New or continuing students. Minimum 60 percent course load. Academic achievement. Financial need.

- Application deadline: March 15 (high school applicants), May 1 (continuing students) or June 1 (transfer students)

**Gregory Moody Award (Gregory Moody)**

- First awarded in 2009: 4 recipients (\$2,000)
- Value: \$500
- Third- or fourth-year students majoring in Psychology, Addictions Counselling, Native American Studies, or any major in Fine Arts. Academic achievement (minimum GPA of 3.0, and a minimum 60 percent course load).
- Application not required

**Dorothy Margaret Meehan Memorial Award (Teresa Diane Andrus)**

- First awarded in 2006: 9 recipients (\$5,200)
- Value: \$500
- Full-time student continuing in any degree program (minimum 60 percent course load). Financial need. Academic achievement (minimum GPA of 2.50).
- Application deadline: May 1

**First Nations Bursary (University of Lethbridge Faculty and Staff)**

- First awarded in 2008: 28 recipients (\$14,250)
- Value: Up to \$1,000 Number: Variable
- Full-time undergraduate students. Financial need exacerbated by an emergency situation.
- Application required, apply at the Scholarships and Student Finance Office

***Undergraduate: Arts and Science***

**Lubov Alexandra de Grandmaison Scholarship - Native American Studies  
(Endowed by the late Lubov Alexandra de Grandmaison)**

- First awarded in 1995: 22 recipients (\$22,000)
- Value: \$1,000 (two payments of \$500 each) Number: 2
- A Native student majoring in Native American Studies. Academic achievement. Financial need may be considered.
- Application deadline: May 1

**Lubov Alexandra de Grandmaison Scholarship - Part-Time Studies in Native American Studies  
(Endowed by the late Lubov Alexandra de Grandmaison)**

- First awarded in 1997: 11 recipients (\$5,500)
- Value: \$500
- A Native student majoring in Native American Studies. Minimum of two and no more than 7.5 graded courses in the Fall and Spring semesters immediately preceding the granting of the award. Academic achievement. Financial need may be considered.
- Application deadline: May 1

***Undergraduate: Education*****Dr. Helen Manyfingers/ Alumni Association Education Award (Dr. Helen Manyfingers and University of Lethbridge Alumni Association)**

- First awarded in 2006: 4 recipients (\$4,000)
- Value: \$1,000
- Third- or fourth-year student enrolled in any undergraduate degree program in the Faculty of Education or a second-year student in the B.Ed. After an Approved Degree program. Registered member of the Blood Tribe. Financial need. Academic achievement (minimum GPA of 3.0).
- Application deadline: May 1

**First Nations Bachelor of Education Scholarship (Faculty of Education)**

- First awarded in 2009: 15 recipients (\$14,000)
- Value: \$500 to \$1,000 Number: 6
- PSI entrance, \$500; PSI entrance and financial need, \$1,000; PSII, \$500; PSII and financial need, \$1,000; PSIII, \$500; PSIII and financial need, \$1,000.
- B.Ed. students registered in PSI, PSII, or PSIII. Three awards academic achievement. Three awards: academic achievement and financial need.
- Application deadline: May 1

***Undergraduate: Fine Arts*****Lubov Alexandra de Grandmaison Scholarship - Fine Arts (Endowed by the late Lubov Alexandra de Grandmaison)**

- First awarded in 1994: 11 recipients (\$15,000)
- Value: \$2,000 (two payments of \$1,000 each)
- A Native student majoring in Art. Academic and artistic achievement. Financial need may be considered.
- Application deadline: May 1

**Lubov Alexandra de Grandmaison Scholarship - Part-Time Studies in Fine Arts (Endowed by the late Lubov Alexandra de Grandmaison)**

- First awarded in 1995: 7 recipients (\$3,500)
- Value: \$500
- A Native student majoring in Art. A minimum of two and no more than 7.5 graded courses in the Fall and Spring semesters immediately preceding the granting of the award. Academic and artistic achievement. Financial need may be considered.
- Application deadline: May 1

***Undergraduate: Health Sciences*****AADAC Addictions Counselling Bursary (Alberta Health Services, Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission)**

- First awarded in 2008: 9 recipients (\$22,500)
- Value: \$2,500 (disbursed \$1,500 the first year and \$1,000 the second year) Number: 4
- Entering the B.H.Sc. Addictions Counselling degree program (40 course and post-diploma direct entry or extended program). Financial need. Three awards to students of First Nations, Métis, or Inuit ancestry; one award to a student who has returned to studies after not attending secondary or post-secondary school for a period of one year or more.
- Application deadline: March 15 (high school applicants) or June 1 (transfer students)



**New Sun-Joy Harvie Maclaren Award in Health Sciences (J. Maclaren, Calgary Community Foundation)**

- First awarded in 2007: 7 recipients (\$45,000)
- Value: \$5,000
- Full-time, Health Sciences students interested in traditional native culture. Preference given to students in the Nursing program. Financial need. Academic achievement (minimum GPA of 3.0, 60 percent course load).
- Application deadline: May 1. Must submit a brief summary demonstrating involvement in reviving and participating in traditional native culture

**AstraZeneca Aboriginal Nursing Award** (Frontline Health Program of AstraZeneca)

- First awarded in 2010: 11 recipients (\$29,000)
- Value: \$3,000 Number: 2
- Nursing students entering or continuing in a preceptored clinical experience program related to Aboriginal Health. Preference given to FNMI students. Student commitment to gaining clinical experience in an Aboriginal setter. Achievement assessed according to the clinical experience program requirements.
- Application not required

***Undergraduate: Management***

**New Sun-Joy Harvie Maclaren Award in Management (J. Maclaren, Calgary Community Foundation)**

- First awarded in 2006: 9 recipients (\$27,000)
- Value: \$4,500
- Full-time continuing students interested in traditional native culture. Preference given to students in the Faculty of Management First Nations' Governance program. Financial need. Academic achievement (minimum GPA of 3.0, 60 percent course load).
- Application deadline: May 1. Must submit a brief summary demonstrating involvement in reviving and participating in traditional native culture

**ATCO Gas Management Award for Treat Seven First Nations (ATCO Gas)**

- None awarded
- Value: \$1,750 Number: 1
- New or continuing students in any undergraduate program in the Faculty of Management from the Blackfoot Confederacy: Siksika, Piikani (Peigan) and Kainaiwa (Blood), Tsuu T'ina (Sarcee), the Stoney (Bearsaw, Chiniki, and Wesley/Goodstoney). Academic achievement.
- Application deadline: March 15 (high school applicants), May 1 (continuing students) or June 1 (transfer students)

**Imperial Oil Limited Award (Imperial Oil Limited)**

- First awarded in 1988: 68 recipients (\$71,500)
- Value: \$1,000 (two payments of \$500 each). Number: Variable
- New or continuing students in the Faculty of Management First Nations' Governance program. Academic achievement. Overall performance and commitment to the objectives of the program.
- Application not required

### **Shell Award in Native Management (Shell Canada Limited)**

- First awarded in 1989: 57 recipients (\$56,250)
- Value: \$1,000 (two payments of \$500 each). Number: Variable
- New or continuing students in the Faculty of Management First Nations' Governance program. Academic achievement. Overall performance and commitment to the objectives of the program.
- Application not required

### **Nugent Family Award (Kevin and Kathy Nugent)**

- First awarded in 2007: 9 recipients (\$4,700)
- Value: \$500
- New or continuing students. Preference given to students in a B.Mgt. program. Academic achievement (minimum GPA of 3.0 for continuing/transfer or 70 percent admission average for high school admits, minimum 60 percent course load). Financial need.
- Application deadline: March 15 (high school applicants), May 1 (continuing students) or June 1 (transfer students)

### **Vern Eagle Bear Memorial Scholarship (Family and Friends of Vern Eagle Bear)**

- First awarded in 1996: 15 recipients (\$3,750)
- Value: \$250
- New or continuing students in the Faculty of Management First Nations' Governance program. Academic achievement. Overall performance and commitment to the objectives of the Native Management program.
- Application not required

### **Graduate Studies: Education**

#### **Métis Scholar Award** (Métis Education Foundation and University of Lethbridge)

- First awarded in 2012: 1 recipient (\$10,000)
- Value: \$10,000. Number: 1
- Full-time continuing in any graduate degree program. Canadian citizen, Métis heritage. Financial need. Minimum GPA of 3.0 and satisfactory performance. Statement of experience with the Métis community.
- Application required by January 12, apply at the Scholarships and Student Finance Office

#### **First Nations Graduate Programs in Education Entrance Scholarship** (Faculty of Education)

- First awarded in 2010: 9 recipients (\$11,000)
- Value: \$1,000 (GPA); \$1,500 (GPA and financial need). Number: 2
- Entering in any Faculty of Education Master's program. One award: academic achievement. One award: academic achievement and financial need.
- Application deadline: May 1

### **Other FNMI Website Sources**

- <http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/site.nsf/en/ao28010.html>
- <http://www.ecfoundation.org/> to apply for Belcourt Brosseau Métis Awards (check deadline – usually March)
- <http://www.naaf.ca/scholarships>
- <http://www.ammsa.com/ammsabursary.html>

### ***Other General Website Sources***

- <http://alis.alberta.ca/ps/fo/scholarships/scholarships.html>
- <http://www.aucc.ca/programs-services/scholarships/>
- <http://www.studentawards.com/>
- <http://www.scholarshipscanada.com/>

### ***Students with Disabilities***

- <http://www.disabilityawards.ca/>

## Appendix C: Summary of Consultations (2011-2012)

**September 7, 2011** – President's Breakfast to initiate development of the Centre.

**September 16** – Meeting with Raulston (University Champion Program)

**October 3** – Barbara Williams and Dr. Kerry Bernes to discuss current counselling support for First Nations students, and future possibilities re expanding the counselling services available to include career counselling and peer/student mentor support. The important role of Elders/Eminent Scholars in providing First Nations students ongoing spiritual, academic and emotional support was also discussed

**October 4** – FNMI support group to acknowledge and affirm the excellent work and ideas contributed by the group over the last several years, to share plans and ideas re the proposed centre as well as gather feedback and answer questions. Elder/Eminent Scholar Andy Black Water accompanied us to the meeting.

**October 14** – Chris Horbachewski and Barry Knapp (University Advancement) to discuss current and projected donor and endowment funding support

**October 18** – Alumni FNMI Chapter to share plans and ideas re the proposed centre as well as gather feedback and answer questions.

**October 24** – Tour of the Native Centres in Mount Royal, University of Calgary and SAIT. Purpose: to tour the centres and obtain relevant information re space, staffing, services provided and funding (see Appendix D). Governance structures and what works/doesn't work was also discussed. As the plans for the centre become more robust, further consultations re governance structures will be initiated.

**November 2** – Dr. Robert Ellis (Dean of Management), Andrea Amelinckx (Director Int'l Programs/First Nations Governance), and Rhonda Crow (Coordinator First Nations Governance) - to discuss ways in which Management sponsored FNMI support activities e.g. Elder and peer support might be aligned with proposed similar supports offered by the centre. Information re the centre was discussed as well as questions answered and feedback gathered.

**November 9** – Karen Clearwater – to discuss information gleaned re FNMI needs during the consultation phase of the University Recruitment & Retention Project. Advice and recommendations re budget development was also discussed.

**November 9** – President Mike Mahan and Vice-President Academic and Provost Andy Hakin – to provide an update of activities and developments.

**November 16** – University Registrar – to provide information and updates re the Centre and its development

**December 3 & 10** – Faculty of Education Capstone Presentations (all day Saturday, 9:00am-3:00pm). The presentations provided an excellent opportunity to visit and speak with Blackfoot Elders who were in attendance as well as alumni and other community members.

**December 6** – Karen Clearwater & Carol Knibbs to discuss budget development.

**December 7** – UCMP videoconference meeting with Spenser Court – to discuss potential contributions of the Blackfoot Community to the University Campus Master Plan. It was agreed to hold further consultation meetings as needed in the future.

**December 12** – Chris Hosgood, Dean of Health Sciences – to introduce the concept of the Centre and to gather feedback and advice.

**December 19** – Dr. David Slomp, Faculty of Education – to discuss academic writing support – implications/recommendations for the Centre.

**January 5, 2012** – ACL Community Meeting, City of Lethbridge – to discuss plan for the Centre and to gather feedback and suggestions. Elder/Eminent Scholar Andy Black Water accompanied us to the meeting.

**January 13** – Welcome Back Souper/Lunch for FNMI students. Elders Andy Black Water, Alan Prairie Chicken, Frank Weasel Head, Evelyn Striepéd Wolf and Sophie Tail Feathers attended the meeting. Feedback and suggestions re potential activities and supports were solicited and noted.

**January 20** – Chris Egan, Spencer Court and Facilities, to discuss the overall concept and vision for the centre with a view to drawing up draft plans re space

**January 31** – Chris Egan, Spencer Court and Facilities to plan follow up activities to the meeting of January 20.

**February 14** – Arts and Science Dean, Chris Nicol, to introduce the concept of the centre and to solicit feedback and advice particularly re governance structures.

**February 15** – Teleconference with Shauna Cunningham, Director TNC, University of Calgary, to discuss governance structures at TNC.

**February 20** – Visit to *First Peoples' House* University of Victoria to look at space, programs, services and activities as well as governance structures.

**February 24** – Visit to *Shq'apthuk* (First Nations Centre) at Vancouver Island University to look at space, programs, services and activities as well as governance structures

**March 6** – Alison Nussbaumer (University Librarian) and other **Library** personnel to discuss the general concept and vision and to solicit feedback and support

**March 9** – Chris Nicol (Dean) and other relevant **Arts & Science** personnel to discuss the First Nations Transitions Program and potential supports the Centre could provide. In addition to discuss the general concept and vision and to solicit feedback and support

**March 9** – Video conference meeting with Paul Michel, Director UNBC Native Centre and Sandra MacDonald, Counsellor, to ask about their Gathering Place – concept, role of Elders, governance, space, funding etc.

**March 12** – Desmond Rochford (Dean) and other relevant **Fine Arts** personnel to discuss the general concept and vision and to solicit feedback and support

**March 12** – Michelle Hogue, Coordinator,, First Nations Transition Program to discuss how the centre might facilitate, and enhance FNTP

**March 14** – Kainai School District, to discuss the general concept and vision and to solicit feedback and support

**March 20** – Craig Loewen (Interim Dean) and other relevant **Education** personnel to discuss the general concept and vision and to solicit feedback and support. In addition to discuss a proposed initiative to provide FNMI training and support to Education students participating in the tutorial program offered by the Education Undergraduate Society (EUS) with the intention of offering tutorials in writing and a variety of majors to Transitions and First Year FNMI students).

**April 2** – Peigan School District, to discuss the general concept and vision and to solicit feedback and support

**April 19** – Becky Lore, Coordinator, Scholarship and Student Finance, ROSS, to identify and discuss current scholarships and support for First Nations students, as well as shortfalls and projected future needs.

**April 20** – Teleconference with Laurie McLaren, Executive Director, Office of Aboriginal Initiatives, Nipissing University, to discuss FNMI initiatives and developments in their university.

**May 1** – Robert Wood, Dean of Graduate Studies, to discuss the general concept and vision and to solicit feedback and support.

**May 2** – Teleconference with Guido Contrares, Associate Director, Rupertsland Métis Institute to discuss the general concept and vision and to solicit feedback and support.

### **Ongoing Consultations Conducted**

- Leroy Little Bear, Roy Weasel Fat and Jane O'Dea ongoing (every two weeks). Elder/Eminent Scholar Andy Black Water was invited to attend those meetings.
- Clarke Ferguson IT- ongoing meetings (as needed) to discuss technology needs and opportunities.
- Carol Knibbs ongoing (as needed) re budget plan development for the Centre.
- Elizabeth Ferguson and Leslie Lavers ongoing (as needed) to identify and discuss current support for First Nations students, as well as shortfalls and projected future needs. In addition, to share developments and receive feedback/advice.

### **Future Consultations Planned/Scheduled**

- *Siksika* School District
- Lethbridge District #51
- Holy Spirit School District (Lethbridge)
- Livingstone Range School District
- Westwind Regional School Division #9

Jane O'Dea

May 3, 2012

## Appendix D: Summary of Other FMNI Native Centres

### Native Centres Summary: Alberta

*Calgary: Mount Royal, University of Calgary, SAIT*

*Lethbridge: University of Lethbridge*

	Mount Royal Iniskim Centre	U of C Native Centre	SAIT Chinook Centre	U of L Current Context
<b>Student #</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 400+ (includes 70/125 AEP)</li> <li>• 4% of total student pop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 500 (includes 77 ASAP)</li> <li>• 1.9-2.1% of student pop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 300 students/ 8,000</li> <li>• 3.75% of student pop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 418 Aboriginal Students</li> <li>• 5% of total student population</li> </ul>
<b>Staff (CF)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director</li> <li>• AEP coordinator</li> <li>• Administrative Assistants (2)</li> <li>• Receptionist (1)</li> <li>• Retention Coordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director</li> <li>• ASAP coordinator</li> <li>• Student Advisor</li> <li>• Administrative Assistant (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinator</li> <li>• Recruitment/ Retention</li> <li>• Administrative Assistant (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinator Native Student Advisor (ROSS)</li> <li>• FNMI Recruitment Officer (ROSS)</li> </ul>
<b>Staff (SF)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Coordinator</li> <li>• Medicine Trail Coordinator PT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LYNX coordinator</li> <li>• N.A.P.I. Youth Coordinator</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Native Student Advisor 1/2 time (ROSS)</li> <li>• <b>Non funded:</b> FNMI Support Group (University); NASA &amp; Alumni FNMI Chapter</li> </ul>
<b>Space</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board/ Presentation room</li> <li>• Kitchen/Lounge</li> <li>• Computer Lab (16 computers)</li> <li>• Reception area</li> <li>• Resource room</li> <li>• 5 or 6 offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boardrooms (2- big &amp; small)</li> <li>• Red Lodge Lounge/kitchen</li> <li>• Computer space (11)</li> <li>• Reception space</li> <li>• Study/tutorial space</li> <li>• 5 offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boardroom</li> <li>• Lounge (1-big) blending into</li> <li>• Computer space (12)</li> <li>• Reception</li> <li>• Kitchen (small) off lounge</li> <li>• 3 offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lounges: NAS, ED,</li> <li>• Kitchen/Food Cupboard: NAS</li> <li>• Computer/study rooms: in Mgt-Int'l - First Nations Gov (small number)</li> <li>• Others in university/library</li> <li>• Classrooms: in University/ Faculties</li> <li>• Offices ROSS</li> </ul>

	<b>Mount Royal Iniskim Centre</b>	<b>U of C Native Centre</b>	<b>SAIT Chinook Centre</b>	<b>U of L Current Context</b>
<b>Smudge Facility</b>	• Kitchen	• ?	• Boardroom and lounge	• NAS
<b>Transition Program</b>	• AEP (EPE funded) • Awards: perfect attendance • Most improved, GPA, 2/year	• ASAP (EPE funded)	• Upgrading not specific FNMI	• FNTP (Arts & Science)
<b>Instructors</b>	• Sessionals 1/2 FNMI	• Staff (1) & sessionals		• Faculty, sessionals and learning facilitators
<b>Services Provided:</b>				
<b>Elders</b>	• Arranged as needed by Medicine • Trail Coordinator	• Cultural advisor • 1/2 day month & as needed	• Cultural advisor • 4 times/month & as needed	• Elder program MGT (4 days/month)
<b>Academic Advising</b>	• Comes in 2 days/week	• Staff	• Comes in	• ROSS and faculties
<b>Scholarships</b>	• Workshops	• Workshops	• Workshops	• ROSS
<b>Career Counselling</b>	• In university	• Lynx program	• In university comes in	• Career & Co-op, CC Course (Education/ Counselling Services)
<b>Counselling</b>	• In university- comes in 2/week	• In university	• In university, 1 day/week comes in	• Counselling Services (ROSS)
<b>Peer Support</b>	• No-in university SU	• No	• No	• FNMI Mentorship program (Alumni & MGT)
<b>Tutorials</b>	• Yes: English, math, science	• Yes	• Yes	• Tutor Program MGT
<b>Emergency Funding</b>	• \$10,000/year \$100-300 • Given 1/semester cash	• No cash: Safeway & Zeller cards • \$25: 1-2 times	• Safeway/ Superstore cards • 1-3 times	• Food Cupboard • Emergency Bursaries • Grocery Cards
<b>Child Care</b>	• None	• None	• None	• None



	Mount Royal Iniskim Centre	U of C Native Centre	SAIT Chinook Centre	U of L Current Context
<b>Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• 28 single units</li> <li>• 4 family units</li> <li>• 30% rent discount</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
<b>Graduation</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Recognition Ceremony</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Pow Wow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convocation Recognition FNMI Grads (Eagle Feather)</li> </ul>
<b>Annual Events</b>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FNMI Orientation, Welcome Back BBQ,</li> <li>• Native Awareness Week</li> </ul>

- Core Funding (CF)
- Soft/Enhanced Funding (SF)

## Gathering Places Summary: British Columbia

*Victoria: University of Victoria*

*Nanaimo: Vancouver Island University*

*Prince George: University of Northern British Columbia*

	<b>UVic First People's House</b>	<b>VIU Shq'apthut *(Phase 1)</b>	<b>UNBC Lhuhuhwehzedel</b>
<b>Student #</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 900 (800 undergrad+100grad)</li> <li>• 5% of total student population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2000 Aboriginal students</li> <li>• 10% of total student population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 500 Aboriginal Students</li> <li>• 12-15% of total student population</li> </ul>
<b>Staff CF</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director</li> <li>• Associate Director</li> <li>• Assistant to the Director</li> <li>• Receptionist (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinator/Liaison</li> <li>• Liaison</li> <li>• Administrative Assistant (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director</li> <li>• Counsellor</li> <li>• Peer Counsellor Coordinator</li> <li>• Receptionist/Admin Assistant</li> <li>• Aboriginal and Rural Education Recruitment officer</li> </ul>
<b>Staff SF</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal Project staff (3) ASP* funding</li> <li>• Cultural Protocol Liaison</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer support (2 student leaders)</li> <li>• Arts instructor</li> </ul>
<b>Space</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entry Hall &amp; Ceremonial Hall (2)</li> <li>• Kitchen &amp; Lounge (2)</li> <li>• Computer Lab &amp; Reading Room (2)</li> <li>• Elders Lounge</li> <li>• Classroom &amp; Seminar rooms (2)</li> <li>• 5 or 6 offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lounge / reading / computer (1)</li> <li>• Kitchen/Elders' Lounge</li> <li>• 3 offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event space (fits 100)</li> <li>• Fully equipped Kitchen (provides feasts and traditional foods)</li> <li>• Computer Lab and quiet study space</li> <li>• Elders room</li> <li>• Classrooms: 2</li> <li>• Reception area and offices for staff (includes large space adj)</li> </ul>
<b>Smudge Facility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elders Lounge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kitchen/Elders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unique ventilation system all over for smudging</li> </ul>
<b>Transition Program</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various programs/colab. Initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various programs/colab. Initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northern Advancement Program (one year)</li> </ul>

	UVic First People's House	VIU Shq'apthut *(Phase 1)	UNBC Lhuhuhwehzedel
<b>Services Provided:</b>			
<b>Elders</b>	• Elders Voice Program	• Elders Program	• Elder program (50 Elders)
<b>Academic Advising</b>	• In faculties but supported by OIA	• In university	• In university
<b>Scholarships</b>	• In university	• In university	• In university
<b>Career Counselling</b>	• Co-op program & Career services	• Career planning & employment info.	• In centre
<b>Counselling</b>	• In university - comes in	• In university - comes in	• First Nations Counselling services in centre
<b>Peer Support</b>	• No specific program	• No specific program	• Peer Support Network Program (2 student leaders and 10 volunteers)
<b>Tutorials</b>	• New to U Vic Prog. Math, Writing tutor	• Math learning centre, Writing centre	• Not aware. Covered by peer support program?
<b>Emergency Funding</b>	• Community Kitchen program	• Food Cupboard, Grocery Cards	• Not aware but funding includes loans, scholarship/ bursaries • UNBC awards; work study; and employment opportunities.
<b>Child Care</b>	• Off campus (will help apply)	• Off campus (will help apply)	• No but adj space to offices set up to accommodate children
<b>Housing</b>	• Dedicated Units (4 single, 1 Family) • Off campus will help find	• Off campus (will help find)	• ?
<b>Graduation</b>	• Indigenous recognition ceremony (2)	• Indigenous recognition ceremony	• Special ceremony

- Core Funding (CF)
- Soft/Enhanced Funding (SF)
- ASP Aboriginal Services Plan (BC government funding plan to increase Aboriginal learners access, participation and success in post secondary system)

## Appendix E: Niistitapi Values



Niistitapi  
Educational Center  
University of Lethbridge



# Niistitapi Values

## **Aatsimoyikaan ~ Prayer**

A daily ritual that one performs in order to ask for guidance from the Creator

## **Kimmapiiyitsinni ~ Compassion**

Being empathetic to your fellow man, including unconditional love, compassion and an appreciation for others.

## **Innakotsiiyinni ~ Respect**

Showing respect for everything in our world.

## **Niitsitapiisinni ~ Way of Life**

The “Real People”, our language, stories, legends, and prayers that make us who we are.

## **Ihpipototsp ~ What we have been given**

The knowledge and wisdom ( culture) that has been passed on to us.

## **Aksistoiyipaittapiisinni ~ Self-Starter**

Giving the best in all your endeavors, it is always positive. Not rushing into tasks recklessly.

**Isspommaanitapiisinni ~ Helpful**

Care, compassion, and helpfulness to your fellowman. We must consider the collective rather than the individual.

**Ao ahkannaistokawa ~ Balance**

Connectivity in our family, clan, tribe, country.

**Ihkanaitaptsiwa ~ Reciprocity**

This can be best described as a mission. Our mission is to educate the younger generations about KIPAITAPIISINNOONI (Our Way of Life).  
Being adaptive in our lives through the knowledge of our elders.

**Pommotsiisinni ~ Transfer of Knowledge**

The transfer of knowledge to our children in order for us to keep our cultural identity.  
As educators, we should pass on the ideals of KIPAITAPIISINNOONI  
in both the native and non native school environment.

**Kakoysin ~ Awareness**

Being aware of our (environment) surroundings. For example, watching and learning during ceremonies.

## Appendix F: The University of Lethbridge Tipi

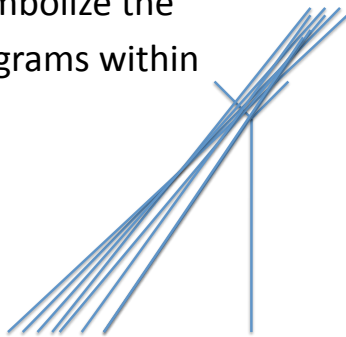


### U of L Native American Programs

The Tipi as a Conceptual Model for  
University of Lethbridge NAS  
Programs

### The Tipi Poles

- The poles symbolize the
- different programs within
- the U of L



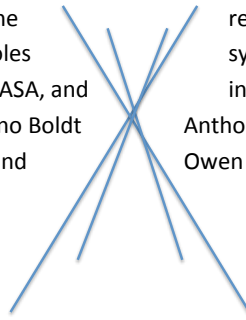


## Initial Stage

The first four poles are tied together to form a quad.

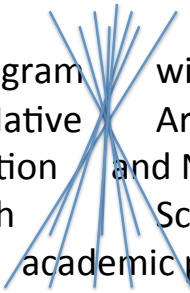
It supports the  
The first 4 poles  
Education, NASA, and  
such as Menno Boldt  
Sam Smith, and

rest of the poles  
symbolize Arts and Science,  
individuals within the U of L  
Anthony Long, William Beckel,  
Owen Holmes



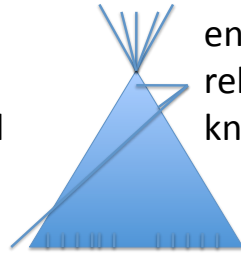
## Evolution and Growth

- As the U of L grew in population and size, new Programs were added such as the Governance Program within the Faculty of Management, Native Art in the Faculty of Fine Arts, Addiction and Nursing in the Faculty of Health Sciences. In addition to the academic programs, the U of L has always had a strong Native American Support Service Program



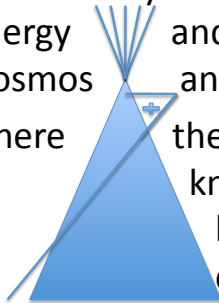
## The Tipi Cover

- The cover encloses the structure to protect, shelter, and provide warmth. Symbolically, the U of L is the enclosure for the nurturing of relationships knowledge



## Tipi Symbolism

- Where the poles meet symbolizes the exchange of energy and knowledge between the cosmos and the earth
- The U of L is where the energies for learning and knowledge come together. The bottom part of the tipi is the connection with the earth and everything on the land.



## Tipi Symbolism

- On the tipi flaps, usually is a cross to symbolize the butterfly. The butterfly is symbolic of knowledge. The U of L is about knowledge.
- Inside the Tipi, in the center, is a fire pit to provide warmth and nurturing. The U of L is a warm and nurturing place for learning.
- The doorway symbolizes an inflow and outflow of relationships with everything on the land.

## Tipi Symbolism

- Inside the Tipi, around the fire pit, is where stories, ceremonies, songs, relationships, and dreams are exchanged and performed.
- The U of L, like a Tipi, is and will continue to be a warm and welcoming place where learning and knowledge is nurtured in an atmosphere of friendship and partnership.