



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WINNIPEG



ABORIGINAL INITIATIVES OVERVIEW

A holistic pilot project for Aboriginal academic success in Canada

“My goal is to work with Elders and leaders to design and conceive a learning experience that reflects Indigenous cultures and traditions and provides a place that is an open door for Aboriginal Peoples. We must provide the means and the resources, the facilities and the services, to allow full expression to this vital part of our population and end too many years of discrimination and poverty.”

Dr. Lloyd Axworthy

Installation Speech, June 2004

In September of 2004 President Axworthy convened an Aboriginal Education Task Force led by First Nations and Métis faculty, staff and students. The Task Force resulted in a holistic and comprehensive Education Strategy and a number of distinct initiatives.

INTRODUCTION – MAY 2007

The University of Winnipeg is a diverse academic community located in downtown Winnipeg's inner-city. The University is a post-secondary institution committed to access and excellence with undergraduate and select graduate programs, a Collegiate that offers high-school level courses, and a Division of Continuing Education serving life long learners. Approximately 10 per cent of the 9,200 students at the University self-identify as First Nations and Métis, making it one of the top four universities in the country for Aboriginal participation.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Aboriginal Governance Program

This innovative joint program with Red River College provides an opportunity for individuals to earn both a Diploma in Aboriginal Self-Government Administration from Red River College, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Aboriginal Governance from The University of Winnipeg. There is a high demand for people who possess this specialized knowledge and skill set to manage and lead at all levels of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal governments and Non-Governmental Organizations.

The Aboriginal Governance program has 30 students in the program and is expecting an additional 20 students for September 2007. In June 2006 the program celebrated its first two graduates.

Governance Honours and Masters Programs

Aboriginal Governance students have the option of completing an Honors program. This program is designed for students wanting to further their intellectual exploration and experience new challenges in Aboriginal Governance. Students may maximize their future career goals and aspirations by pursuing a Masters in Aboriginal Governance (in development). This one year graduate level program provides an excellent opportunity for students to work independently on a topic of their choice. The Masters program will also include a council of Elders who will act as mentors, professors, advisors and educators. The anticipated start date for the Masters program is the 2008-09 Academic Year.

Mentorship Program

Mentors assist students to reach their potential and discover their inner strengths. The Aboriginal Governance Mentorship program is a voluntary experience that has been created in order to provide a hands-on opportunity for AGP students to connect with professionals who have a background in business, senior administration, and management. Mentorship provides students with the opportunity to engage in real world situations that would require them to apply critical thinking and problem solving skills for decision-making in a professional work environment.

Harry Daniels Distinguished Lecture Series

Each year the Aboriginal Governance Program invites prominent Aboriginal scholars, philosophers, and advocates to share their knowledge and experiences at the Harry Daniels Distinguished Lecture Series. The series is named for Mr. Harry Daniels (1940-2004) who was instrumental in advocating for Aboriginal peoples during the constitutional talks leading up to the inclusion of s.35 and recognition of Aboriginal and Treaty rights in the *Constitution of Canada 1982*. The Aboriginal Governance Harry Daniels Distinguished Lecture Series has had the opportunity to welcome Chief Ovide Mercredi (former AFN National Chief); author, advocate & Professor Patricia Monture; NAAA award recipients John Borrows and Dr. Marlene Brant Castellano among others.

Community-Based Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (CATEP)

CATEP is a partnership between The University of Winnipeg and Seven Oaks and Winnipeg School Divisions. The program provides Aboriginal teacher assistants with the opportunity to attain a university degree part-time and become certified teachers while continuing to develop their skills by working within the school system.

Inner City Campus Bachelor of Education ACCESS Program

This program provides an opportunity for students from Winnipeg's inner city with non-traditional academic backgrounds to become teachers. Fifty percent of seats are reserved for Aboriginal students. Academic supports, counseling services, cultural teachings, and a warm supportive environment are part of the 5 year integrated B.A./B.Ed. program.

In October 2005 The University of Winnipeg and The University of Manitoba celebrated their partnership and shared commitment to access by opening the William Norrie Centre in Winnipeg's North End. The Centre houses The University of Winnipeg's Bachelor of Education ACCESS program and The University of Manitoba's Social Work ACCESS program and allows students to receive an education in a welcoming environment right in their own community.

Urban and Inner City Studies Program

Cities have played an important role in human life for centuries, but never more so than today. As half of the world's population now resides in urban areas, the need to understand the changing structure of cities is paramount. In Canada, cities continue to be centres of great challenge - from managing suburban growth to redirecting support into programs to assist central and inner city areas. Urban and Inner City Studies is a new interdisciplinary Major that examines the city, and particularly the inner city, as a dynamic environment. The program combines a traditional urban studies focus with a strong community development orientation, and includes courses that examine various aspects of the inner city, such as women and the inner city, the urban Aboriginal experience, and immigrants and refugees. Individuals with work and volunteer experience in the inner city can have their experience assessed and recognized as part of their course requirements.

Indigenous Science Degree (in development)

Rapid advances in technology have made education in science increasingly important in society today. However there is a growing realization that, for some, such an education is not being met through traditional science programs. The Indigenous Science program in development will be highly multi-disciplinary in nature with a strong environmental component. Barriers to science will be addressed by maximizing flexibility in course requirements and by introducing science preparation courses either in the first year of studies, or through the Jump Start program to improve outcomes. New courses, especially those concerned with connections between science and Indigenous knowledge, will be introduced and the nature of the program lends itself quite naturally to having a significant practical or field component.

College for the Environment and Science Complex

The Richardson College for the Environment and Science Complex will enhance and complement the Indigenous Science Degree program. Scheduled to open in the fall of 2009 the LEED College and Complex will provide the campus, community, and province with innovative programming while the facility acts as a

catalyst for growth and renewal in the inner-city. The vision includes a public display space for science learning demonstrations, science labs for use by inner-city schools, an urban environmental park, green space for university and community use, new integrated housing, and opportunities for inner-city and Aboriginal students to learn science, relating traditional Indigenous knowledge to current environmental challenges.

The Collegiate

The University of Winnipeg Collegiate is a high school within the University. The Collegiate offers high school graduates from St. Theresa Point and Wasagamack First Nations a transition year program to post-secondary studies. The program begins in June when faculty members travel to the two communities to conduct workshops and interview student candidates. Once in Winnipeg, there is specific and ongoing support for students including counseling, a tutor, mentorship, supervised "study spaces", monthly meetings, and programs arranged through the Manitoba Aboriginal Youth Career Awareness Committee among other community partnerships.

Division of Continuing Education

Aboriginal Management Certificate

This program is designed to provide individuals with the skills, knowledge and awareness for positions in management. Participants gain a solid understanding of the fundamentals of current business management and of traditional leadership in order to deal with the complex issues facing Aboriginal communities and organizations today

Kinesthesis Specialist Educational Assistant and Language Specialist Educational Assistant programs

Offered in partnership with the Neeginan Institute of Applied Technology, the programs include an extensive practicum and run full time for approximately one year. This year, the program includes specialized courses in communication augmentation, courses in language acquisition and development, developing reading and writing skills, sign language and Braille, in addition to the regular EADP courses. In 2004, Continuing Education offered the EADP with specialized courses in Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in conjunction with Red River College. This partnership program won a national award from the Canadian Association of University Continuing Education.

Aboriginal Spirituality, Culture and History Certificate Program

The "Red Road" is a unique education and healing initiative that combines academic educators and Aboriginal Elders and Traditional People in the program delivery. The program utilizes a holistic approach integrating the mental, physical, and emotional and spiritual aspects of the individual in the learning process. In addition to classroom instruction and teaching circles/sharing circles, regularly scheduled sweat lodge ceremonies are held. This program is designed to reverse the negative effects of colonization, contribute to the healing of the

participants and educate students on Aboriginal spirituality, culture, and history while stimulating interest in further education.

ABORIGINAL RESEARCH

Canada Research Chairs

Dr. Dawn Sutherland, awarded a *Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Science Education* in 2006, is exploring the relationship between culture and science education in Indigenous communities. The appointment builds on Sutherland's expertise teaching education students in the field of science by incorporating traditional Aboriginal knowledge into her lessons. Sutherland aims to have Aboriginal culture integrated into school curricula so science education is more meaningful, interesting, and relevant for Aboriginal students. Sutherland's research will also benefit the University's Innovative Learning Centre which includes programs with local schools such as *Eco-Kids: Adventures in Environmental Science* and the new Richardson College for the Environment.

Dr. Jennifer S.H. Brown, awarded a *Canada Research Chair in Aboriginal Peoples in an Urban and Regional Context* in 2004, works in conjunction with the Centre for Rupert's Land Studies (CRLS), which she directs, to foster deeper understandings of Aboriginal history and cultures through bringing together oral, written, and archival sources, and language and material-culture resources relating to First Nations and Métis communities. Building on the University's unique location three blocks from the Manitoba and Hudson's Bay Company Archives and its proximity to other downtown Aboriginal research resources, and drawing upon its own Elizabeth Losey Library of fur trade and Northern studies, the Centre attracts numerous Aboriginal students, scholars, and community and family-history researchers. Oral-history resources already gathered and made available include the stories of Omushkego Cree Elder Louis Bird, presented at www.ourvoices.ca and in two widely appreciated books; and two volumes of narratives and life histories from Hudson and James bays. Other projects are helping Aboriginal communities and students to retrieve and write their own histories. As they develop the knowledge and skills needed for history teaching in their home communities and for claims research around issues of identity, land, and treaties, their work also changes Canadian history as we begin to see it from different angles and perspectives.

SERVICES FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

Aboriginal Student Services Centre

In the fall of 2004 The University of Winnipeg opened its new 3000 square foot Aboriginal Student Services Centre (ASSC). This expanded Centre provides Aboriginal students with a safe environment and a sense of belonging throughout their studies on campus. The ASSC has been created with the goal of establishing bridges between students' cultural and personal backgrounds and the culture of the University. All Aboriginal students, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, have access to the support services the Centre has to offer including

assistance with admission, advising, counseling, and registration. The ASSC not only addresses the needs, issues, and concerns of Aboriginal students on campus but also maintains and creates stronger links with the main Aboriginal communities across Manitoba. With the increase of Aboriginal students on campus, the new ASSC is a hub of excitement at The University of Winnipeg.

Elder On Campus

In addition to the teachings and cultural activities held at the ASSC, the Elder also provides support and guidance for all students, faculty, and staff. The Elders' office is located within the ASSC.

Aboriginal Transition Year

The decision to leave one's community/home to attend an urban university setting may be difficult or intimidating. The Transition Year Program (TYP) has been developed to assist Aboriginal students in making that transition a success. The TYP Coordinator assists students in the application, course selection, and registration process. All TYP students take a 'core' Academic Writing course and participate in a mandatory orientation the week prior to the start of lectures.

Tutoring

Tutorial services within the Academic Writing Centre are readily accessible for all University of Winnipeg students. However, for Aboriginal students who may feel ill-prepared for post-secondary education and the academic demands that follow, the ASSC provides 'in house' tutorial services for Aboriginal students by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students within the Centre.

Aboriginal Student Council

It is important that Aboriginal students (First Nations, Métis & Inuit) have a voice on issues that pertain to them. With one of the largest student bodies on campus, the ASC seeks to advance the aspirations, interests, and concerns of Aboriginal students in their efforts to achieve common/collective goals. The ASC oversees a variety of cultural and social events within the Aboriginal Student Services Centre such as potlucks, family nights, movie nights, and the annual Spring Powwow.

Daycare

The University of Winnipeg Students' Association Daycare is a non-profit, provincially licensed Pre-School Daycare on the campus of The University of Winnipeg. Its mandate is to accommodate University of Winnipeg students, faculty, and the community at large. Currently the daycare has 62 spaces, and provides care for children aged 18 months to 6 years. Plans are underway to expand and relocate the daycare for the fall of 2009.

Aboriginal Student Housing (in development)

One of the most significant barriers for students is the lack of family housing because individuals who have spouses and children/dependents typically put the needs of their families above their own. As a Canadian Mortgage and Housing

research report confirmed, the extended family is an important part of Aboriginal cultures and many students feel that housing policies and regulations are often not flexible enough to accommodate this important cultural dynamic of the extended family. An innovative residence for urban Aboriginal students as well as students from First Nations, the North, and rural areas would welcome children and extended family members. On-campus housing can reduce feelings of isolation and provide opportunities to establish relationships and build community on campus. This housing would include physical space for ceremony and sharing circles, computers with internet access so students can stay connected with Elders and family support in their home communities, and cross-cultural training for students, staff, and administration supporting Aboriginal students off and on campus.

PLAR

The Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition process at The University of Winnipeg assesses knowledge and skills gained through formal education, work, volunteer, and life experience. Through demonstration of knowledge and skills, individuals are eligible to receive credit toward a degree.

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre

As an inner city institution, The University of Winnipeg believes it has a responsibility to its neighbours, many of whom are Aboriginal children, youth and their families. In a diverse neighbourhood challenged by poverty the University is working in partnership to reach out, establishing the Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre in 2005 to bridge the digital divide and offer free access to computers, tutoring, and cultural programming in a safe and structured environment. Wii Chiiwaakanak, which means “partners” in Anishnabemowin, began with an alliance between the Southeast Resource Development Council (SERDC) and The University of Winnipeg and now includes many other community organizations and local schools.

To address the graduation gap, the Centre offers a daily Homework Club during the academic year which is staffed by University student volunteers. Due to demand an off-site Homework Club is now also being offered at a local high school one night a week. The Centre runs a weekly Elder’s Teaching Circle, an IC3 Computer Training program, an Aboriginal Languages Project, as well as summer camps for inner city children to address summer learning loss. All programming is free of charge.

Innovative Learning Centre

The Innovative Learning Centre is a targeted, comprehensive, and holistic approach founded on the Seven Sacred Teachings that encompasses programming based in inner city schools, professional development opportunities and educational resources for school teachers and principals, research opportunities for University of Winnipeg faculty and students, and an ambitious

Model School for inner city children and youth associated with the University's renowned Collegiate high school.

Eco-Kids and Enviro Techs

Led by Kevin Chief, The Innovative Learning Centre is working with the Winnipeg School Division to target at-risk children and youth identified by WSD schools. The Centre has begun with strategic school activities and programming designed to build that critical sense of belonging that poverty can take away. *Eco-Kids* (age 10 – 12) and *Enviro Techs* (age 14 – 17) explore the relationship between science, the environment, and traditional Indigenous knowledge.

Model School (in development)

The Model School will provide Winnipeg's least advantaged students with enriched learning opportunities in a state-of-the-art sustainable facility with labs, classrooms, and a greenhouse where organic vegetables and herbs can provide curriculum, nutrition, and community economic development opportunities. Adding to this integrated ecological education will be a community garden designed by the students where the natural world can be explored, prairie ecosystems demonstrated, and sacred indigenous plants studied and understood.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Scholarships and Bursaries

The University of Winnipeg annually offers 15 awards valued at \$125,000 designed specifically for Aboriginal students.

Opportunity Fund

The Opportunity Fund provides a bold approach to improving access to post-secondary education by encouraging youth to complete their high school education and by addressing the financial and social obstacles to attending university. The \$10M endowed fund will move toward closing the existing 'graduation gap' and, through innovative funding and programming, enable inner-city youth to achieve their full academic potential through the support provided in the form of Tuition Credit Accounts and Opportunity Bursaries.

Tuition Credit Accounts will provide students, as early as the fourth grade, with a financial incentive to stay in school and 'earn' their way toward a post-secondary education at The University of Winnipeg. This program, to be piloted in the fall of 2007, will encourage Winnipeg's Aboriginal and inner city youth to finish high school. In total, a student could potentially earn up to \$4,000 in credits toward future UWinnipeg tuition.

Opportunity Bursaries will be available to both part-time and full-time students, and will be awarded to applicants who show academic promise and financial need and come from a student group currently under-represented at The University of Winnipeg. The Opportunity Bursaries will augment traditional

student awards by covering critical needs such as emergency childcare, food, and shelter.

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