



Pesk'tek

The Path Ahead:
The Journey to Reconciliation and Action Reform



UPEI Indigenous Strategic Framework and Initiatives
2024-2028

Office of the President and Vice-Chancellor
University of Prince Edward Island



Land Acknowledgement



We would like to begin by acknowledging that we are on Epekwitk, part of the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaw nation. This territory is covered by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship, which recognize the Mi'kmaw title and establish the ongoing relationship between the Mi'kmaw Nation and the Crown. We are all treaty people. All my relations.



Consultation Process



Indigenizing universities requires active collaboration and involvement with the Indigenous communities and the University's community at large. The Advisor to the Vice-President Academic and Research (VPAR) in Indigenous Affairs met with representatives from Lennox Island First Nation, Abegweit First Nation, the Native Council of Prince Edward Island, and the Faculty of Indigenous Knowledge, Education, Research, and Applied Studies (IKERAS). The Indigenous advisor also met with Elders, university students from many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, and UPEI's Indigenous Student Advisor. Further discourse took place with the UPEI President, Vice President of Academic and Research, respective Deans, faculty members, staff, and students in producing this strategy.

Message from Elder-in-Residence

My journey at UPEI began in 2001 when I gave a guest lecture on “Our Way of Life of the First Nation” and discussed the implications of the Indian Act. I was a member of the Abegweit First Nation Education Team, which also comprised Drs. Basil Favaro and Fiona Walton from the Faculty of Education. Even though they have both since retired, I have remained connected to UPEI through my work with the Mawi’omi Indigenous Student Centre and Student Affairs. In October 2016, UPEI honoured members of the Abegweit First Nation, Lennox Island First Nation, Native Council of PEI, the Aboriginal Women's Association of PEI, and the Mawi’omi Student Centre team during the *Spirit of Reconciliation Day*. This was the first of many reconciliation initiatives by UPEI. In January 2017, I received a Letter of Appointment from the president and senior management team at UPEI to officially welcome me as the first Indigenous Elder in Residence. The appointment recognized the years and my experience working with the faculty, staff, and students. In May 2017, I received an honorary degree from UPEI.

In November 2021, I was one of the co-founders of the Faculty of Indigenous Knowledge, Education, Research, and Applied Studies (IKERAS). In 2022, I was offered the position of Advisor to the Dean of IKERAS. More recently, I received the *Spirit of Love and Respect Knowledge Bundle* from Mount Royal University in Calgary and our Indigenous peoples in Hawaii in March 2023. This sacred bundle focuses on land-based teachings that IKERAS provides its students.

I have witnessed and been involved in UPEI’s action on reconciliation, which still needs a great deal of work such as sharing about the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP) 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC); the 231 recommendations of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls that includes Gender (MMIWG); the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP); and the Government of Canada Indian Act.

I see reconciliation in action at UPEI, but we still have a lot to teach and share since every day is a new day. It is a great feeling when I see UPEI students at Convocation or when they share their marks from an Indigenous Studies course they have taken. They are so proud of the Indigenous knowledge they have gained. I also admire the Mi’kmaw Knowledge Keepers who teach and share their knowledge.

When Dr. Albert Marshall, a respected Mi’kmaw scholar and Elder, came to UPEI, he shared the concept of Two-Eyed Seeing to recognize the strength of Indigenous ways of knowing and the strength of Western ways of knowing and how to use both competencies together. These teachings share and work together. I am honoured to be part of the IKERAS team, and I will always remember my Ancestors who have guided us to where we are today and will continue to guide us for many generations.

Mist No’kmaq / All My Relations
Judy Clark

Message from the Advisor to the Vice-President Academic and Research on Indigenous Affairs

As a member of the Mi'kmaq First Nations and retired educator, I joined UPEI as the first Advisor to the Vice-President Academic and Research on Indigenous Affairs in 2021. My position entails planning, developing, and implementing Indigenous initiatives at UPEI. This includes providing guidance on stakeholder collaborations and helping to understand and respond to the Calls to Action and Calls for Justice relating to post-secondary education as outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's final report.

The path to realizing the spirit and intentions of the Indigenous Strategic Framework and Initiatives will take significant effort and time. However, through the commitment of the President, vice presidents, senior management, faculty, and staff, we have started to build relationships with all Indigenous communities. Since I took on this role, we have created safe spaces for dialogue on campus and with our Indigenous communities.

My ambition for the Indigenous Strategic Framework and Initiatives is to increase the number of tenure-track Indigenous faculty and staff, improve Indigenous student enrolment and graduation rates, and improve relations with Indigenous communities.

Mist No'kmaq / All my relations.

Corinne Chappell



Message from the President and Vice-Chancellor

All Canadians must recognize the painful legacy of Canada's residential school system and the intergenerational impacts it has had on Indigenous Peoples, continue to learn the truths about this tragic history in our country and honour the healing journey of the survivors and their families.

Education is a key component of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action and the University of Prince Edward Island has a vital role to play in the ongoing process of reconciliation in our community.

A key initiative, implemented in 2022, was the creation of the Faculty of Indigenous Knowledge, Education, Research, and Applied Studies (IKERAS). The Faculty has already begun delivering a number of courses, including IKE 1040: Indigenous Teachings of Turtle Island, which is mandatory for all incoming undergraduate students.

While UPEI has made some strides, we still have much to do on "the path ahead," including the development of a strategic plan with meaningful actions. I thank and congratulate Corinne Chappell, Advisor to the Vice-President Academic and Research on Indigenous Affairs, Elder Judy Clark, and IKERAS faculty members on their leadership to date, and in particular, for developing Pesk'tek, The Path Ahead: The Journey to Reconciliation and Action Reform. This framework and corresponding action plan will guide the University on its next steps towards reconciliation and providing a supportive environment for Indigenous students, staff, and faculty.

We must always remember that we are all Treaty people and that UPEI is located on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq of Epekwitk. In keeping with this strategic framework and action plan, let's continue to think about what we can do, together, to move towards a better tomorrow.

Wela'lioq, thank you.

Greg Keefe, DVM, MSc, MBA
President and Vice-Chancellor (Interim)
University of Prince Edward Island



Reconciliation

UPEI is committed to advancing reconciliation through higher education. As a community, we have started a journey of growth to realize the role we must play in promoting an understanding of Indigenous history and culture and supporting respectful relationships. UPEI recognizes that discussions in this era of truth and reconciliation will unveil difficult facts within our country's history. However, in keeping with our institutional vision, we know that education is vital to understanding the history of colonialism and the forward-looking process of reconciliation. Working together, we must use knowledge as a catalyst for meaningful change in communities here on Prince Edward Island and around our world (*UPEI Strategic Plan, 2018-2023*).

Commitments toward Reconciliation within the UPEI Strategic Plan, 2018-2023

- Contribute to cultural richness and economic prosperity of communities through the development of highly qualified personnel, collaborative partnerships, and mobilization of knowledge.
- Better understand and implement calls to action identified at a national level through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, including providing education, cultural awareness, and sensitivity training for members of the Board of Governors, faculty, staff, and students.
- Acknowledge Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing and integrate these throughout the curriculum.
- Promote a greater understanding of reconciliation, inclusion, equity, and social justice within our campus community.
- Encourage the use and consideration of Indigenous ways of knowing to complement Western forms of knowledge and scholarship within UPEI research and graduate programs.
- Build a stronger focus on creating community and service-learning opportunities that add value and depth to our students' educational journeys and foster new levels of community connectivity.
- In collaboration with the Faculty of Indigenous Education, Research, and Applied Studies (IKERAS) and the Mawi'omi Indigenous Student Centre, engage in new and meaningful ways of indigenizing the UPEI campus, and partnering with Indigenous communities to enhance Indigenous student participation and achievement through partnerships, development of new recruitment strategies, and the creation of scholarships and supports for Indigenous students.



UPEI's Continuous Journey to Reconciliation

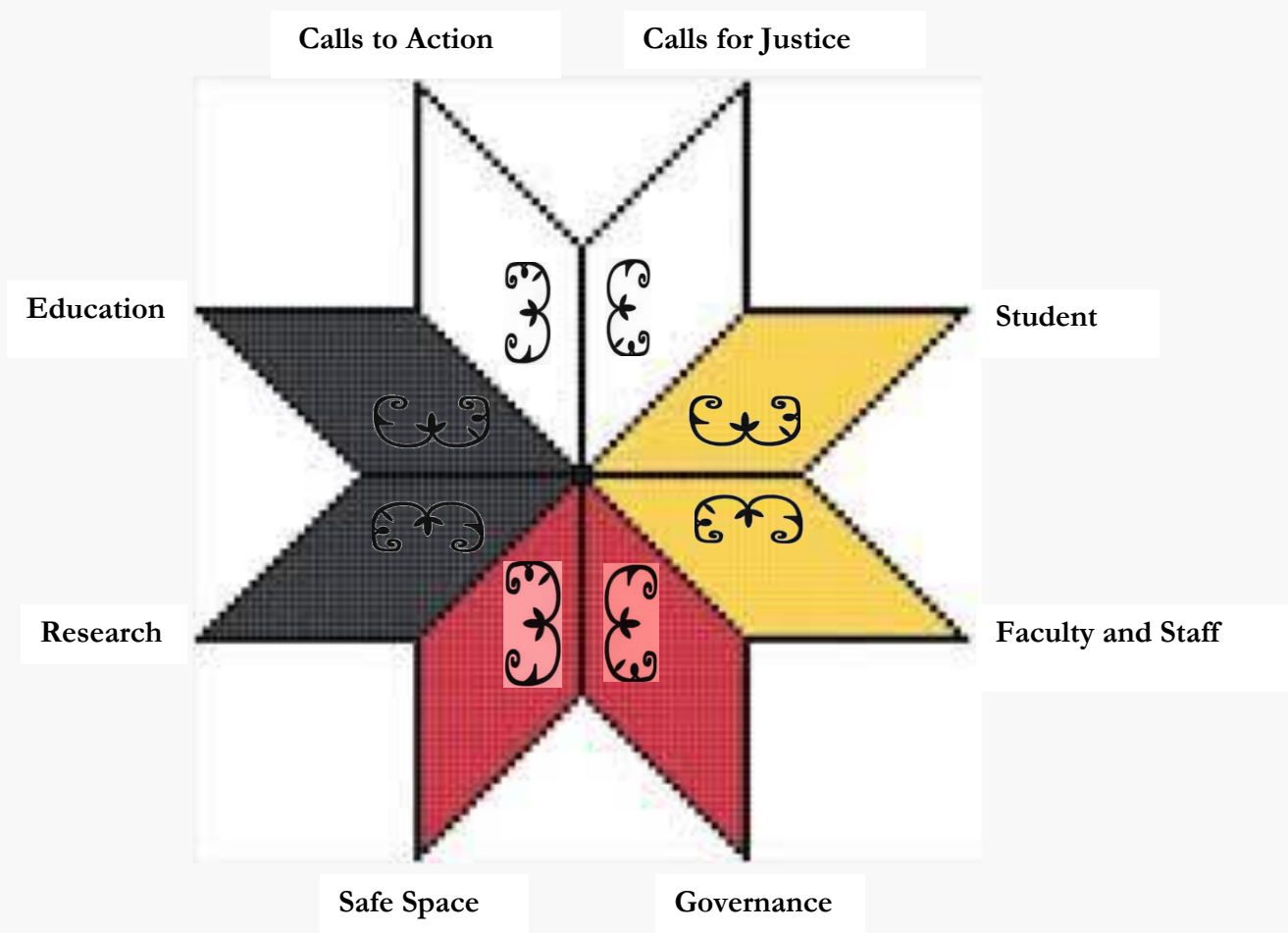
September 2004	Faculty of Education offered Aboriginal Studies courses
February 2005	Mi'kmaw Elder John Joe Sark received an honorary degree
May 2006	J. Elmer Hynes Aboriginal Studies Achievement Award established
May 2007	First annual "Connecting Aboriginal Cultures" powwow took place
January 2009	Aboriginal Student Centre—Mawi'omi Centre—officially opened
June 2009	Convocation held in Iqaluit for Inuit graduates of the UPEI Master of Education program
January 2010	John Joe Sark Memorial Scholarship Award established
January 2013	UPEI and Aboriginal Survivors for Healing unveiled the Memorial Cabinet
September 2016	Tenure position filled by Mi'kmaw scholar
October 2016	UPEI's Founders' Day honoured the Aboriginal Peoples of PEI
January 2017	Judy Clark appointed as UPEI's first Elder in Residence
March 2017	UPEI Indigenous Advisory Circle announced
March 2017	Three Sister's Teachings and Knowledge Garden unveiled
May 2017	Mi'kmaw Elder Judy Clark received an honorary degree from UPEI
September 2017	Faculty of Education marked Orange Shirt Day
September 2021	UPEI marked the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
November 2021	Faculty of Indigenous Knowledge, Education, Research, and Applied Studies established
November 2021	Advisor to the Vice-President Academic and Research on Indigenous Affairs position created
May 2022	Mandatory course, IKE1040 Indigenous Teaching of Turtle Island, introduced
July 2023	Two Assistant Professors (term positions) and eight Sessional Lecturers taught in the Faculty of IKERAS

Note: Although there were countless other important Indigenous initiatives and events in the past, both on campus and in the community, only a few are captured in this document. To ensure we capture our historic journey, the Faculty of IKERAS is committed to honouring and remembering all who have contributed and have already referenced important milestones in other ways and documents.

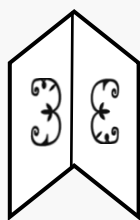
Eight-Pointed Star with Double-Curved Motif

The Mi'kmaw star is regarded as a representation of the sun, a potent figure in traditional spiritual life, as well as a symbol of unity for the Mi'kmaw People. The points emphasize balance both within oneself and with Mother Earth while illustrating the four directions.

The eight-pointed star represents hope, balance, and unity.
The double -curved motif represents balance, community, and alliance.



While drafting a strategy plan is critical, the actual work begins when it is adopted by the Senate and Board of Governors and brought to life at UPEI. University of Prince Edward Island faculties, departments, and administrative units will be encouraged to align their internal plans and priorities with the Indigenous Strategic Framework and Initiatives plan.

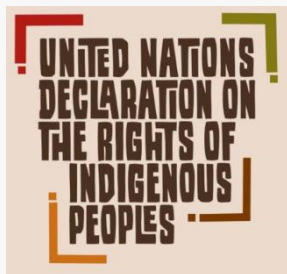


Truth and Reconciliation 94 Calls to Action and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls 231 Calls for Justice

Calls to Action	Calls for Justice
<p># 7. We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.</p>	<p># 2.1 We call upon all governments to acknowledge, recognize, and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples to their cultures and languages as inherent rights, and constitutionally protected as such under section 35 of the Constitution.</p>
<p># 10. We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation. ii. Improving education attainment levels and success rates. iii. Developing culturally appropriate curricula. iv. Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses. v. Respecting and honouring Treaty relationships 	<p># 11.1 We call upon all elementary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions and education authorities to educate and provide awareness to the public about missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people, and about the issues and root causes of violence they experience. All curriculum development and programming should be done in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, especially Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people. Such education and awareness must include historical and current truths about the genocide against Indigenous Peoples through state laws, policies, and colonial practices. It should include, but not be limited to, teaching Indigenous history, law, and practices from Indigenous perspectives and the use of <i>Their Voices Will Guide Us</i> with children and youth.</p>

Note. These are examples of UPEI's responsibility to uphold and meet the 2015 *Truth and Reconciliation of Canada's Final Report* and 94 Calls to Action, and the 2019 *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* and 231 Calls for Justice.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)



UNDRIP is a human rights instrument that sets out the rights of Indigenous peoples around the world. Human rights instruments include declarations, conventions, and treaties intended to define and uphold human rights in international law. Many, such as UNDRIP, are not legally binding. Instead, they provide authoritative ideas and approaches that can influence state laws and practices.

The Declaration contains 46 articles describing a variety of collective and individual rights. It identifies states and governments as responsible for protecting and upholding these rights. Its goal is to defend the survival, dignity, and well-being of Indigenous people.

Existing international human rights instruments already apply to Indigenous peoples. But UNDRIP makes an important case that they may need special protections. It defines specific rights related to Indigenous identities, livelihoods, and ways of knowing and being in the world.

Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination.

The central themes of UNDRIP include:

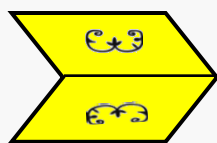
- the right to self-determination;
- the right to be recognized as distinct peoples;
- the right to free, prior, and informed consent;
- the right to be free from discrimination.

The core matter of self-determination affirms the right of Indigenous peoples to decide what is best for their communities and to carry out those decisions in ways that are meaningful to their people. This includes respecting existing treaty relationships and invites the negotiation of new agreements.

The Declaration includes protections for cultural rights, such as preserving Indigenous languages and religions. Many Indigenous languages are on the verge of being, or have already become, extinct. Similarly, many Indigenous cultural and religious practices have been violently suppressed worldwide by Christian colonial rule for centuries. They require specific and special protection.

The Declaration also includes rights to lands, territories, resources, and the environment. It supports rights to self-determination in key areas such as legal systems, health, and education. UNDRIP calls on states to create effective mechanisms to address human rights violations. This includes redress for attacks on Indigenous peoples' identity, integrity, and self-determination.

Retrieved from the full text of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
<https://humanrights.ca/story/the-united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples>



Students, Faculty, and Staff

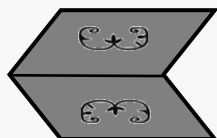
Students	Faculty and Staff
<p>Spirit and Intentions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Develop a retention plan for Indigenous students * Design academic supports specifically for Indigenous students * Create smudging areas on campus * Establish an Indigenous student advisor program * Be included in ongoing orientation programs * Add Indigenous culture to New Student Orientation week * Create an Indigenous student guide * Create Indigenous cohorts * Hold regular sacred fires * Celebrate cultural events * Create Aunties-in-residence positions * Provide Indigenous stole to graduating students * Establish mentorship programs for post-secondary students via peer supports * Provide ongoing cultural recognition for Indigenous students on campus: powwows, cultural events, and cultural inclusion * Offer free tuition or fellowships for foster care Indigenous students * Provide publishing assistance to Indigenous students 	<p>Spirit and Intentions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Acknowledge and enact the diversity of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing * Develop and support a Senior Executive Advisor on Indigenous Initiative and Reconciliation position * Re-create an Indigenous Advisory Circle focused on operational matters * Include land acknowledgment on syllabi * Hold lunch seminars on Indigenous initiatives * Assist and support a wholistic curriculum * Implement one action toward reconciliation * Participate in cultural awareness training i.e. Four Seasons of Reconciliation online training * Indigenous perspectives in content areas * Plan for a new Indigenous Teaching and Learning Site with broad cross-consultative input and collaboration * Support capacity-building events within the Mawi'omi Indigenous Student Centre * Recruit Indigenous staff and faculty * Provide release time for faculty for Indigenous special initiatives and curriculum development * Hold faculty-based Indigenous celebrations * Provide opportunities for faculty to participate in summer Indigenous mini-camps



Governance and Safe Space

Governance	Safe Space
<p>Spirit and Intentions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Establish partnerships with Indigenous communities off and on reserve * Establish Indigenous Learning Fund * Create Indigenous bursaries and scholarships * Re-establish the Indigenous Advisory Council focused on governance and community engagement * Provide support for TRC calls to action and MMIWG calls for justice 	<p>Spirit and Intentions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Construct a building for the Faculty of IKERAS * Support for Faculty, students, and staff * Showcase Indigenous artwork in common areas throughout campus * Hold annual Pow wows * Hold Indigenous movie nights outdoors * Develop a calendar for Indigenous awareness days and activities * Establish a sweat lodge on campus * Plant an Indigenous community garden * Provide drumming at UPEI Panther Sport home games * Establish a winter lodge * Create a Traditionalist-in-residence position





Education and Research

Education	Research
<p>Spirit and Intentions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Create an Indigenous web portal * Develop field and land-based pedagogy * Develop a diploma in Mi'kmaw language * Create in-service Indigenous teaching practices * Develop summer preparatory programs for Indigenous high school students * Introduce a case-management approach for monitoring students, especially in first-year programs * Promote self-identification by Indigenous students * Develop Indigenous courses for all students, not only for Indigenous students * Create an Indigenous recruitment program * Establish professional development for faculty and staff on Indigenous issues 	<p>Spirit and Intentions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Improve data collection from Indigenous students * Create opportunities for more Indigenous community-based research * Provide internal research support for students conducting Indigenous research * Build greater capacity for Indigenous research and collaboration * Create a Canada Research Chair position to support IKERAS * Build a network of community-based researchers working on Indigenous field research



Timeline

There is no specific timeline or endpoint for the implementation of the Indigenous strategy framework and initiatives at UPEI. Rather, it is an ongoing process that aims to guide the university towards reconciliation.

Accountability, Review, and Reporting

UPEI in its commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action as highlighted in its *UPEI Strategic Plan, 2018-2023*, in conjunction with the Indigenous Strategic Plan, will establish an accompanying Indigenous Strategic Accountability, Review, and Reporting Plan. This will further demonstrate national leadership toward accountability, an ongoing review process, and the measuring of its stated spirit and intentions. The structures and processes for accountability, review, and reporting will be developed during the next year (2024-2025) with broad consultation and engagement of key stakeholders.

Meeting our Goals

In recognition of the complex nature of reconciliation, indigenizing the academy, and introducing Indigenous knowledges, education, research, and applied studies to UPEI ensuring that all Indigenous student success, meaningful community engagement, and partnerships, and adherence to Indigenous governance principles, during the next year (2024-2025), the University will begin the process of working toward an inclusive and supportive governance structure. This may include but is not limited to, a reconstituted Indigenous Advisory Council to work with a Senior Executive Advisor on Indigenous Initiatives and Reconciliation.

Honouring

The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, whose well-known statement on education as the key to reconciliation, *“Education got us into this mess and education will get us out of it”*, also reminded us that the process will be long, and openly pronounced, it will take another seven generations, the length of time that Indian residential schools were in operation.

An important tradition that Indigenous peoples practice and respect is our honouring ways. We must be patient and kind to one another and honour each other's gifts. We must honour all our relations. Bringing life to this Indigenous Strategic Plan means we must honour all who have (past), are (present), and will be (future) engaged with it. We must nurture this living document as a relation, as it has the spirit of many contained therein.



Canada's Universities Reaffirm Commitment to Truth and Reconciliation

Retrieved from <https://www.univcan.ca/media-room/media-releases/canadas-universities-reaffirm-commitment-to-truth-and-reconciliation/>

On April 28, 2023, Universities Canada announced the adoption, by its members, of the new Commitments to Truth and Reconciliation, which replace Universities Canada's 2015 Principles on Indigenous Education. These new commitments have been updated to reflect the evolving context of truth and reconciliation in Canada and seek to deepen the commitment of Canadian universities to supporting university education for Indigenous students and advancing reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

As leaders in communities across the country, Canada's universities have long acknowledged, and have been committed to upholding, their responsibility to advance truth and reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. As the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, once said: "Education got us into this mess, and education will get us out of it."

Through the renewed Commitments to Truth and Reconciliation, universities affirm their commitment to:

- respecting and making space for Indigenous expertise, knowledges, and cultures in policies, structures, and governance;
- supporting Indigenous student success;
- advancing the Indigenization of teaching and learning;
- ensuring research is respectful, mutually beneficial, and collaborative;
- developing strong engagement with Indigenous communities; and
- supporting Indigenous Peoples within Canadian universities.

Universities Canada's Commitments to Truth and Reconciliation were drafted in consultation with the association's Advisory Group on Indigenous Higher Education, leaders across universities, and Indigenous communities and organizations. We are deeply appreciative of all those who supported this work.



Seven Sacred Teachings

There are many versions of these seven teachings across Turtle Island. Here we have called them the Seven Grandfather Teachings; they are also sometimes referred to as the Seven Grandmother Teachings or the Seven Sacred Teachings. Nations and communities may use differing stories to impart these teachings, but the same guiding principles and morals can be found in all.

Wisdom – Beaver

The teaching of wisdom is taught to us by the beaver. Beavers use their teeth to cut trees and build dams; in doing this they have a positive impact on their community (the nature around them), their family (who live in the dam), and themselves (by finding purpose and health in doing what they are meant to do). The beaver reminds us that we all have gifts and a purpose in this world. It is through the love of knowledge that we find wisdom.



Bravery/Courage – Bear

The teaching of bravery is taught to us by the bear. Bears are known to confront threats they should be fearful of, especially female bears who will protect their cubs against larger bears and other dangers. The bear also reminds us to be playful and to rest when needed. It is in the balance of these teachings that we are taught when to be courageous.



Honesty – Sabe/Raven

The teaching of honesty is taught to us by Sabe or sometimes the raven. Sabe is believed to be closer to the spirit world than humans and reminds us, just as the raven does, that we must be truthful to who we are. The Ojibwa expression *Kitchi-Sabe* means to walk tall, or to have integrity. It is only by being honest that we can have integrity.



Respect – Buffalo

The teaching of respect is taught to us by the buffalo. The buffalo provided Indigenous Peoples with everything they needed to survive: hides for warmth and shelter, meat for eating, muscle for sinew, and bones for tools. The buffalo reminds us to respect all living things, and in doing so we achieve a balance that keeps us alive.



Truth – Turtle

The teaching of truth is taught to us by the turtle. The turtle was here when all life was created and carries teachings related to the beginning of life on its back. There are 28 scutes around the perimeter of a turtle shell; these represent the 28 days of a woman's menstrual cycle, which is key to the creation of life. There are 13 scutes in the centre of a turtle shell; these represent the 13 moons and the 13 times the Earth circles the sun each year.



Humility – Wolf

The teaching of humility is taught to us by the wolf. The wolf is strong and powerful alone, but finds its greatest strength when part of a pack. Wolves are known to remain with packs for life, raising pups while protecting the group's well-being. The wolf teaches us that humility imparts strength to families and communities.



Love – Eagle

The teaching of love is found in all of the other teachings. It is the eagle who mirrors these lessons back to us. The eagle is strong enough to carry all of the teachings and flies high enough to see all of creation. When we live by these teachings and see ourselves as the eagle does, we are able to love who we are. And once we have found that balance within, we can provide love to our family and community. For this reason, the eagle feather is one of the most sacred items and must be earned.



Retrieved from <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/indigstudies/chapter/seven-grandfather->

