

University College of the North (UCN)

Jurisdiction: Manitoba

Contact: Elder Stella Neff, Doris Young

Level: Post Secondary Education

Theme: Government or board policies

Description of Practice:

The University College of the North (UCN) Council of Elders is an advisory council within the institutional governance structure. Its existence reflects the primary institutional purpose of UCN: to provide a post-secondary education environment that is grounded in the cultural and spiritual life experience of Aboriginal students.

The Council of Elders has 16 members, representing the region served by UCN. The Council works in partnership with the Governing Council, where it has voting representation. The Council has voting privileges on the Learning Council, and is also actively involved with various academic committees, such as promotion and tenure, faculty recruitment and selection, program advisory groups, new program approval processes.

Individual members of the Council of Elders may be invited to participate in specific program and student life functions as appropriate.

Background:

The University College of the North was established in 2004 through an Act of the Manitoba legislature, with a mandate to provide a blend of university and college learning opportunities with due regard to the demographics of the region served, and particularly to the priorities of Aboriginal people and communities.

The Council of Elders is established under the powers of the UCN Act.

Development:

Since 1998, the former Keewatin Community College has employed a College Elder as an executive staff member, reporting directly to the President. This appointment has been pivotal in creating an institutional climate that reflects the priorities of Aboriginal people, who are the majority population in northern Manitoba.

With the creation of UCN in 2004, a new governance and institutional structure to embed Aboriginal values, was defined and implemented.

Evidence:

A broad range of services and activities to better serve Aboriginal students and staff has been implemented over the past several years. This includes: First Nation based educational centres, each governed by its own community board of directors; Aboriginal Centres at the campuses; new college and university programs focussed on Aboriginal cultural, health, social development and justice priorities; employment equity policy commitments.

Adaptability:

There must be a clear and demonstrated commitment to support and respect Elders in the institution. Gaining a better understanding of the role and function of Elders in a modern post-secondary institution is essential to the success of this initiative.

Further information:

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