



Relationships with Indigenous Peoples and Communities

Opening Statements

This framework was adopted by the Board of Governors upon the acceptance and approval of the Northern College Indigenous Council on Education and any amendments to the framework will only be applied upon the recommendation of the Council.

Northern College is guided by a Vision that includes responding to the choices and directions of Indigenous peoples. This will guide the relationship between Northern College and the Indigenous peoples and communities it serves.

Northern College celebrates the richness of our Northern Ontario heritage and acknowledges the significant contribution of the First Peoples to our way of life.

Northern College recognizes that as a result of our northern history education is a vital element to the success of the Indigenous generations of today and tomorrow who are, and will continue to be, integral threads in the rich fabric of our northern society.

Northern College acknowledges that while it respects and supports the Indigenous peoples, it can never truly understand their experiences and perspectives. This admission does not diminish our commitment to serve the Indigenous communities: it strengthens our resolve to respond to their guidance regarding their choices and directions.

Inclusiveness and openness to cultural norms will be the expectation throughout the organization. This includes respecting the rights of Indigenous employees, students, clients and communities to practice their culture and to work and live as Indigenous peoples.



Definitions

Community - a place, and/or commonality of experience.

Indigenous – the original people of the area; may include First Nations descent (Status and Non-Status), Métis and Inuit.

World view – a perspective of the world based on culture and upbringing.

Indigenous Communities

Northern College acknowledges and respects the distinctiveness of the peoples in each of the Indigenous communities it serves, recognizing that these distinctions flow from traditional economies as well as economic prospects for the future; the practice of spiritual beliefs; language spoken in the home, classroom and workplace; social issues; aspirations for the future. Further, Northern College acknowledges and respects the unique world view of the Indigenous communities it serves and their corresponding holistic view of education.

It is understood that Indigenous communities desire the credentials that Northern College grants, in order to fully participate in the workforce. Cultural and economic goals of the Indigenous community will be shared with Northern College, through the direction of the political and social structures within the communities.

Programming

Northern College will develop specific programs and courses in response to the choices and directions of the Indigenous peoples. The College is committed to working with Indigenous communities to develop innovative programming that meets the needs of the Indigenous peoples. Northern College will contribute to the preservation, enhancement and maintenance of the Indigenous language and culture.

Northern College will offer opportunities, each academic year, for all students to access meaningful and grounded learning opportunities related to Indigenous history, culture, context and issues.



Northern College will ensure that all programs have, embedded in curriculum, examples and references that reflect Indigenous culture and communities.

Northern College will respond to the choices and directions of Indigenous peoples by developing programs and services that contribute to the social and economic development of Indigenous communities and individuals. The traditional, current and future economies of each community, the skills and aptitudes of individuals, and the need to pursue other educational opportunities will guide the development of programs.

Northern College respects that Elders safeguard traditional knowledge, act as teachers through transmission of culture and language, are historians, advisors, counsellors, spiritual guides and healers. Northern College will request the assistance of Elders in the development and delivery of programs, understanding that requesting Elders to take part in our programming and curriculum development carries with it the responsibility to ensure that their recommendations are taken into consideration and are implemented as fully and in as timely a manner as possible. Further, Northern College will develop the guidelines it requires to work with Elders in a respectful and equitable manner.

Northern College Staff

Teaching strategies will be sensitive to learning styles of Indigenous students.

Opportunities for professional development will be offered to all staff throughout the year.

Student service practices will recognize and be sensitive to the unique circumstances, needs and preferences of the Indigenous clients we serve.

Northern College acknowledges that our Indigenous staff hold a world view that is unique from the mainstream. This difference in world view at times may cause discordance between staff at all levels. While this is normal and to be expected, Northern College's workforce and practices will continue to evolve with the Indigenous communities it serves. It is expected that the distinct world views of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff will be blended into the policies, practices and decisions of the College.

Negotiations with staff, communities and individuals will take into consideration differences in world view, historical issues, economic development goals, and opportunities for shared growth in common directions with the College.



Cultural awareness is a requirement for the development of staff in all areas of the College. Cultural awareness opportunities will be offered with an expectation that all staff of Northern College participate in a minimum of three (3) cross-cultural awareness activities, each calendar year. These opportunities may include awareness sessions with guest speakers, reading books, writing research papers, visiting Indigenous communities, or attending Pow Wows, conferences, Lunch and Learn sessions and other events offered each year by the College.

Northern College will provide opportunities for all students to be exposed to Indigenous culture and reality. This will benefit both our Indigenous and Non-Indigenous students and will further strengthen the links between the Indigenous population and Northern College.

Structure

There are a minimum of two seats on the Board of Governors for Indigenous representation, one of which is for the Chair of the Northern College Indigenous Council on Education. The Board of Governors will be provided the opportunity to partake in Indigenous Awareness activities on an annual basis.

The Northern College Indigenous Council on Education has been created to guide the direction of programs and services for Indigenous students and communities. They act as the link between the staff and communities and the policies that govern the work of the organization. The Council is governed by its Terms of Reference. The President of the College is a voting member on the Council.

Senior management acts as a resource to the Northern College Indigenous Council on Education. They are responsible for carrying out the direction of the Board of Governors and the Indigenous Council on Education and for ensuring that the College's vision and mission are upheld. While not considered experts in the various Indigenous cultures of the region, senior management empowers front line staff to perform their duties according to the choices and directions of the Indigenous communities.

Northern College expects that all staff will be responsive to the unique choices and directions of the Indigenous clients/students/communities we serve.