**Embedding Indigenous Perspectives into Fleming College Policies and Protocols**

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**An Information paper to guide Fleming College leaders**

**Historical Context:** *Why are we doing this work?*

Before European settlers arrived in Canada, Aboriginal (First Nations, Inuit and Metis, ‘FNIM’ or ‘Indigenous’) people had highly effective systems for sustainable governance, food security, healthcare, holistic well-being and education. Settlers learned how to survive and prosper in North America with the help of Indigenous allies. In an attempt to share in the rich North American natural resources, the Crown signed nation to nation treaties with First Nations after their autonomy had been validated by the Royal Proclamation of 1763. These treaties were binding legal documents and outlined that land would be shared peacefully. In exchange, First Nations would share in the mutual prosperity through socio-economic benefits for “as long as the sun shines, the rivers flow and the grass grows.” (1)

Over time as Canada prospered, the respect for the spirit and intent of equal partnership waned. Indigenous people gradually became seen as a barrier to be eliminated. The Indian Act of 1876 was intended to control First Nations and dismantle their culture and autonomy. It did this in several ways: “Indians” were denied the right to vote; were given European names; were confined to small reserves on the least desirable land; weren’t allowed to have legal representation for land claims; weren’t allowed to leave the reserve without express permission from the Indian Agent (government representative); were banned from holding traditional ceremonies, dancing and drumming; were prohibited from speaking their languages; were banned from gathering in groups of three or more without an Indian agent present; weren’t allowed to use mechanized farm equipment or kill their own cattle for food; and they had to give up their Indian status if they wanted to vote, join the military, attend university, or marry someone who didn’t have Indian status. (8)

With the Indian Act, the nation to nation relationship of the treaties effectively ceased to exist. The government official on reserve land, or ‘Indian Agent’ maintained ultimate control. ‘Status’ had few entitlements, but without it people were forced to leave their home communities (including not being buried there), abandon their identities and connection to family and culture.

Families were also torn apart by the residential school system. These institutions, run by the Canadian government and various churches, were in effect from the 1820’s to 1996 with over 100,000 students attending. The goal of these schools was to assimilate Indigenous children into Canadian society, or according to Duncan Campbell Scott, Minister of Indian Affairs, to “kill the Indian in the child” (1920). The tragic stories of abuse in the residential school system have finally been voiced with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 2015 Final Report. Beyond the traumatizing effects on individual children and families, the schools erased Indigenous culture and traditions. Intergenerational effects continue because parents who suffered abuse could not provide loving and effective parenting to their children, who then could not do so for their children and so on. It should be no surprise then that Indigenous people have a general mistrust of the education system. (27)

Taking the historical context into account, Fleming can demonstrate that it is responsive to the needs of FNIM learners here and now for Canada’s 150th anniversary. Fleming can help contribute to the long term goal of reconciliation and building a good way of life, Mino-Pimatiziwin, for its community because we are all treaty people.

**Educational Mandates for this work;** past and present

* The [Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071115053257/http%3A/www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgmm_e.html) (RCAP) was a public inquiry into the relationship between FNIM people and Canada. It was initiated in 1991 and completed in 1996. The final report is over 4000 pages long. The section on [education](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071124125456/http%3A/www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sim5_e.html) presented a framework for [lifelong, holistic learning](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211053020/http%3A/www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/si43_e.html#2. The Framework: Lifelong, Holistic Education) which presents valuable concepts about the relationships involved in learning and the nature of learning from Indigenous perspectives.

RCAP was intended to be a twenty year roadmap for addressing a number of ongoing injustices between Aboriginal people and Canada, however, as [a 1999 update explains](http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/LOP/ResearchPublications/prb9924-e.htm), i[mplementation](http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/LOP/ResearchPublications/prb9924-e.htm) of the report’s recommendations were only partial even in the early stages. The Assembly of First Nations produced a [report card in 2001](http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/aboriginals/pdf/afn_rcap.pdf) and it echoes the concern that while solutions have been formulated through community consultation, implementing them was not a priority for governments. (4)

* The 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) Final Report - Calls to Action, is a very recent and important document that is reshaping the views of many Canadians and their work with reconciliation. The calls to action are specifically requesting that educational institutions help lead the way, and honour the treaties they are part of. Schools have a responsibility to account for the unfortunate reality that education was not designed with Indigenous people’s best interests in mind. There are over 15 calls to action directed at the educational sector to improve Indigenous student funding, access, support services and curriculum associated with all levels of Canadian education. To quote the chair of the commission, Senator Murray Sinclair, “Education is what got us into this mess…but education is the key to reconciliation.” (27)
* Formerly the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, now known as Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan), is the national voluntary membership organization that represents public colleges, polytechnics and institutes. CICan has developed the Indigenous Education Protocol (IEP), an aspirational document that outlines how to foster Indigenous learning and empowerment. It consists of 7 guiding principles that colleges can pledge to implement. Fleming College signed the IEP in December, 2015, following the release of the TRC Final Report. (9)

**The 7 Principles of the IEP that signatory institutions agree to are:**

1. Commit to making Indigenous education a priority.
2. Ensure governance structures recognize and respect Indigenous peoples.
3. Implement intellectual and cultural traditions of Indigenous peoples through curriculum and learning approaches relevant to learners and communities.
4. Support students and employees to increase understanding and reciprocity among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.
5. Commit to increasing the number of Indigenous employees with ongoing appointments throughout the institution, including Indigenous senior administrators.
6. Establish Indigenous-centred holistic services and learning environments for learner success.
7. Build relationships and be accountable to Indigenous communities in support of self-determination through education, training and applied research.

Exemplary practices of each principle are available in the expanded IEP list, attached.

**Where to focus our work and why:**

In 2017, all students are expected to enter the education system with the same opportunities and preparedness. However, data tells us that FNIM students are more likely to: have grown up in the child welfare system, to have experienced child abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and violence in the home or from peers, to have internalized negative self-beliefs from these experiences, to suffer low self-esteem, to have learning disabilities (often undiagnosed), to live in poverty, to have less access to nutritious food, to experience mental health and addiction issues, and are less able to voice these experiences and express their needs.

Many post-secondary institutions recognize these barriers and are willing to foster inclusion by adjusting their policies, procedures, protocols and practices. Leaders need to turn their minds to how they can incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their operations.

Based on the CICan Indigenous Education Protocol with examples from other colleges, here are some of the areas across Fleming College that could be examined for embedding of Indigenous perspectives.

**Harassment & discrimination**

* Harassment and Discrimination policy could make mention of racism towards staff/students of Indigenous ancestry. Material for such inclusion could come from the Ontario Human Rights Code. (24)
* Consider a healing circle for harassment and discrimination concerns involving Indigenous students or staff.

**Sexual violence and awareness**

* Humber has an excellent gender policy that includes trans rights Etc. (22)
* Fleming’s Sexual Violence procedure is very well done and could have an addendum that mentions the high rates of violence towards Indigenous women, a statement honouring the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and include culturally appropriate resources. (18)

**Hiring/recruitment**

* Yukon College has Indigenous self-identification in staff recruitment. (28)
* Hiring/Recruitment: preference could be given to an Indigenous candidate when two candidates are otherwise equal in qualifications
* Qualified Indigenous people could also be hired for jobs not thought of as Indigenous specific
* Consulting Services Policy: could add preference to an Indigenous consultant if their proposal is of equal value, regardless of it being an Indigenous project or not

**Program Review (Academic, including Indigenous knowledge and culture)**

* Student Rights & Responsibilities: Indigenous cultural practice is a right
* For Program Review, part of the review process could be to consider how Indigenous knowledge/culture/history can be added to the course (so this would be updated whenever courses are updated on an ongoing basis), and also to include the experiences of Indigenous students with the courses
* For academic disputes (or any dispute where a panel review is needed) consider adding an Elder to the panel and/or an Indigenous community advocate
* Transfer credits/PLAR: Consider giving credit for Indigenous traditional knowledge (From CICan IEP Principle 6) and to parents since parenting requires significant life skills & many Indigenous students come to college as parents already. Also consider forming a parenting support group for students

**Finance & Purchasing**

* Humber has a policy for their art collection. If Fleming was ever to create a similar policy or procedure it could be unique in making Indigenous art a priority (21)
* Purchasing procedure could include buying from an Indigenous business when able and consider it value added. Although no mention of Indigenous context, Confederation College’s procurement process has a “Value-Added” practice (12)

**Space policy & Facilities**

* Cambrian College stands out with an Indigenous specific policy. Effective since 2008, it allows for the use of medicines (smudging) and occasional use of space for ceremonies (3)
* Fleming already has a “Smudge Friendly Zone” in unwritten protocols/processes. This could be written as a protocol so it’s better understood for new staff/students
* Use of Space & College Grounds Policies -Indigenous events and ceremonies could be noted as priority like Cambrian’s Use of Space procedure (3)
* Fleming facilities staff could be trained in the cultural rationale for circular set-up for events, Etc.

**Media Relations**

* In Media Relations: Indigenous issues warrant a response from knowledgeable Indigenous staff/students and allies if none available, or from both

**Death, Bereavement & Spirituality**

* Georgian College has Aboriginal culture mentioned in their Observance of Religious Observances Procedure (20)
* Death of a student policy: if an Indigenous student were to pass away, it would be appropriate to have Elders/Indigenous grief counsellors and a ceremony. Confederation College has a death of student protocol, though not Indigenous (10)
* Grieving times for FNIM staff and students may need to be adjusted to accommodate Indigenous spiritual customs. This can apply to someone’s Elder/spiritual teacher, a Clan member, spiritually adopted family, Etc. Rationale in section 11.2 of the Ontario Human Rights Code (24)
* Many FNIM organizations allow Indigenous staff four days off a year to attend traditional Indigenous ceremonies. This could be applicable to students and staff with rationale in section 11 of Ontario Human Rights Code (24)

**Parking**

* Indigenous Elder/traditional teachers parking spots near door (traditional persons often carry “bundles”, drums Etc.) (17)

**Employee Awards**

* Fleming Employee Awards Program: could add Indigenous category, reward/recognize staff for implementing Indigenous procedure updates (14)

**Reflections for Consideration:** Progress and exemplary practises

You may have noticed more events opening with traditional Indigenous land acknowledgments lately. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been playing a large part in a nationwide shift in consciousness towards acknowledging Indigenous presence. The climate is changing as more Canadians are educated about Indigenous history and proud to be “allies” of Indigenous peoples. Postsecondary institutions, informed by government discourse and on the ground floor with Ontario’s youth, are taking up their place as leaders in this movement.

There are many ground-breaking initiatives happening at all levels of the education system. The Ontario Institute of Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE) has a multifaceted approach, including a Massive Open Online Course with 25,000 people across the world learning Aboriginal Worldviews and Education. Following the 2010 signing of the Accord on Indigenous Education by the Association of Deans of Education, OISE appointed Dr. Suzanne Stewart as a Special Advisor to the Dean on Aboriginal Education. Dr. Stewart coordinates the Indigenous Education Network, a community working group of students, faculty, and community members in addition to OISE’s Indigenous Advisory Council. (25)

At the community college level, all Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) member colleges now have Indigenous Advisory Councils and counsellors/support services staff for Indigenous students. Most have Indigenous resource centres with special events and access to traditional cultural activities. Most have access to visiting Elders (respected carriers of traditional and spiritual knowledge) and some have Elders in residence. Many are creating YouTube videos about their Indigenous student resources. Some have Indigenous language courses and employ peer support students. In 2015 CICan began recognizing colleges based on their Indigenous capacity building. See quote below:

“CICan's Gold Medal for Indigenous Education Excellence (2016) went to Centennial College for our Indigenous Strategy for Access and Participation, a comprehensive mandate that provides services tailored for Indigenous students, community outreach and the inclusion of Indigenous culture in the college curriculum. In addition to developing a variety of initiatives and services to support Indigenous learners, Centennial has promoted understanding and reciprocity among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people through the college's new [Indigenous Studies: First Peoples in Canada Certificate](http://www.centennialcollege.ca/programs-courses/schools/school-of-advancement/programs/stackable-credentials/indigenous-studies-first-peoples-in-canada-certificate/), various research projects and co-curricular programs.” Centennial News June 9, 2016 (6)

**More Ontario College best practises include:**

* Algonquin College has remote accessibility to live-chat with students online. (26)
* Cambrian College has an Aboriginal self-identification campaign and self expressed ‘weaving of Indigenous culture into the very fabric of the college’. (2)
* Canadore College is offering “dual diplomas” to Indigenous students who can earn two Indigenous Wellness related diplomas in three years. (5)
* Centennial College offers Indigenous Studies Credential - First Peoples in Canada Certificate for students in any program. (7)
* Confederation College currently has Indigenous content in 95% of its courses with the goal of reaching 100% this year. (11)
* Fleming’s Bishka program is an exemplary partnership with Trent University to facilitate the transition to campus and provide ongoing peer mentorship.
* Fleming’s Miigwewin Revised Process for Gifting Traditional Knowledge Holders is an exemplary financial protocol that embodies Indigenous knowledge.
* Georgian College has cultural events, peer support mentors, visiting Elders and an Indigenous Student Advisor at all four of their campuses. (19)
* Humber’s Indigenous Students Association is a student run club that welcomes Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students to coordinate monthly community events. (23)

Like award-winning Centennial College, Confederation has employed a forward thinking, deep rooted, whole college approach. College staff are encouraged to give feedback about what they want to know more about. Confederation was proactive in reaching for comprehensive policy changes even before Colleges and Institutes Canada released their Indigenous Education Protocol. They created a set of Indigenous Learning Outcomes (ILO’s) in all subjects and hired a dedicated ILO Officer. (11) See quote below:

“Confederation College has been embedding Indigenous knowledge into curriculum since 2011 through specially developed Indigenous Learning Outcomes (ILO). The infusion of ILOs into program-specific courses throughout the College is intended to provide students with opportunities to develop an understanding of Indigenous culture, context, and worldview in relation to their chosen career field.  As outlined in the Negahneewin Council 10 Year Vision, the ILOs also align well with the Indigenous Education Protocol developed by Colleges and Institutes Canada, and adopted by Confederation College in 2014.” (11)

The Indigenous Learning Outcomes are a set of seven competencies as follows:
 1. Relate principles of Indigenous knowledge to career field
 2. Analyze the impact of colonialism on Indigenous communities
 3. Explain the relationship between land and identity within Indigenous societies
 4. Compare Indigenous and Canadian perceptions of inclusion and diversity
 5. Analyze racism in relation to Indigenous peoples
 6. Generate strategies for reconciling Indigenous and Canadian relations
 7. Formulate approaches for engaging Indigenous community partners

**Fleming’s Commitment Going Forward**

More colleges and institutions are moving towards this Indigenous policy direction, however few have articulated a general Indigenous support statement as of yet. However, Centennial College has created an Indigenous Strategy for Access and Success, attached, and modified their strategic plan to prioritize FNIM learners. The first principle of CICan’s Indigenous Education Protocol, attached, mentions embedding commitment to Indigenous learners in Colleges’ strategic plans as an exemplary practice. (9)

Fleming College has done a variety of good work in terms of Indigenous student services and events. However, Fleming could be unique in articulating an Indigenous policy that would provide rationale for various procedures. It could be a very simple statement that would carry significant weight by being approved by the Board of Governors. The general statement could also include a listing of all other policies/procedures/protocols that have been given Indigenous consideration. Here is an example of some possible material for such a statement:

“We at Fleming College hereby express our commitment to living in right relations with Indigenous people and culture. We respect that we are on Indigenous land and wish to move forward as allies in support of our First Nations, Inuit & Metis staff, students and community members. We publically share this college wide approach in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action and Colleges and Institutes Canada’s Indigenous Education Protocol.”

Sir Sandford Fleming College has demonstrated sustained efforts to work in respectful relations with Indigenous people and culture. Since Fleming is already working to improve cultural considerations beyond the classroom, it could formalize these initiatives with a written public statement policy to demonstrate Fleming’s position as a supporter of Indigenous learners. This would provide a venue to capture the great work the college continues to do to create a good way of life, mino-pimatiziwin, for its entire community.

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**Attachments:**

* CICan Indigenous Education Protocol

 <https://www.collegesinstitutes.ca/policyfocus/indigenous-learners/protocol/>

* Cambrian College Smudging & Use of Space Policy

<http://cambriancollege.ca/aboriginal-students/wabnode-centre-for-aboriginal-services/traditional-aboriginal-activities/>

* Centennial College Indigenous Strategy for Access and Success <http://www.centennialcollege.ca/student-life/student-services/indigenous-education-services/indigenous-student-services/>
* Confederation College Indigenous Learning Outcomes Chart <http://www.confederationcollege.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/department/ilo_chart.pdf>

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