

Nipissing University Aboriginal Council on Education Terms of Reference

Background

Early in the 1980's, an academic leader at Nipissing University reached out to the local Aboriginal community and established an informal round table on education. The purpose of the group was to help guide the University's direction in Aboriginal post-secondary education. Building on the roundtable, in the early 1990's a formal Aboriginal Council on Education (ACE) was established. Aided by funds and initial reporting requirements to the Ministry of Education, the Nipissing University Aboriginal Council on Education set out to help the university recruit and retain more Aboriginal learners among a variety of responsibilities. Today the Nipissing University Aboriginal Council on Education seeks to continue the partnerships developed with local Aboriginal communities and to see those develop further and help to achieve Aboriginal communities' goals in education as well as those of Nipissing University.

1.0 Preamble

- 1.1 In recognition of the commitment to advance a relationship between Nipissing University and Aboriginal communities, the Nipissing University Aboriginal Council of Education (herein after referred to as the NUACE) is hereby established.
- 1.2 The NUACE is an advisory body to and resource for the Office of Aboriginal Initiatives and Nipissing University.

2.0 Vision

- 2.1 The NUACE exists to advance and to support Aboriginal student success in all aspects of Nipissing University governance, academic and research programming.

As an advisory group, the NUACE ensures the diverse perspectives of regional Aboriginal communities, peoples and knowledges are represented and reflected in Nipissing University governance.

3.0 Mandate

- 3.1 The NUACE is mandated to recommend and advocate for programs that support Aboriginal students and to promote engagement with Aboriginal communities.

4.0 Selection of Chair

- 4.1 The Chair of the NUACE will be chosen through consensus by voting members. The Chair's term shall be three years. He/She shall not serve for more than six consecutive years but shall be eligible again for appointment after one year's absence from the position.
- 4.2 The duties of the Chair include chairing all NUACE meetings, appointment as the NUACE representative on the Nipissing University Board of Governors and assumed duties

required by the Board of Governors, and representing the NUACE and/or the Board of Governors at various functions within the university and community. If the Chair is unable to fulfill his/her duties, the Chair may appoint another voting member as a designate to fulfill the responsibilities of the Chair.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1 The NUACE has a direct relationship with the Office of Aboriginal Initiatives and the Office of President providing annual reports and recommendations on matters affecting Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal communities we represent.
- 5.2 The NUACE has direct participation within Nipissing University governance structures, appointing the Chair, or designate, as a member to the Board of Governors and to the University Senate.
- 5.3 The NUACE engages regularly within the Board of Governors and the Senate and will provide an annual report.
- 5.4 The NUACE will make recommendations in the development of an Aboriginal Strategic Plan linked with the overall Nipissing University Strategic Plan as periodically updated, identifying specific goals, outcomes, and reporting mechanisms.
- 5.5 The NUACE serves as a resource to the Office of Aboriginal Initiatives on Aboriginal post-secondary education and the relationship between Nipissing University and the Aboriginal communities we represent.

6.0 Objectives

- 6.1 The NUACE will pursue the following objectives:
 - 6.1.1 **Students:**
To promote and encourage access, support, outreach, and success within a welcoming environment for all Aboriginal students.
 - 6.1.2 **Institutional:**
To promote academic programs and research that is responsive to and reflective of Aboriginal students and communities.
 - 6.1.3 **Community:**
To bring forward Aboriginal community interests, opportunities and goals.

7.0 Membership

7.1 The NUACE consists of a majority of representatives from First Nation communities as well as additional members in accordance with the description provided below (7.1.1-7.1.4). All members must receive specific accreditation through authorized letters of appointment ensuring ongoing accountability and reporting to their respective communities. Applications for Membership will be approved by the NUACE and may include:

7.1.1 First Nations

All First Nations are eligible for membership. Those First Nations within the surrounding areas served by Nipissing's campuses and/or home communities of Nipissing students are especially encouraged to consider membership.

7.1.2 Métis Communities

Recognized Métis communities are also eligible for membership, especially those within the surrounding area and/or home communities of students.

7.1.3 Aboriginal advocacy and service delivery organizations

Aboriginal organizations with a direct mandate relating to Aboriginal youth or education and training are eligible for membership.

7.1.4 Aboriginal students

Up to two Aboriginal students in good academic standing selected by the Aboriginal student body may also be members of the NUACE.

7.2 Membership also welcomes an Elder designated to support the work of the NUACE in all of its activities and meetings. The Elder is a non-voting member.

7.3 The President and other Senior Officers of Nipissing University Administration and a representative from each faculty are invited to attend all meetings of the NUACE and serve as ex-officio, non-voting members.

7.4 From time to time, as required and/or requested by the NUACE members, resource people are invited to the NUACE meetings for a particular purpose to ensure informed decision-making and appropriate access to information.

7.5 Conflict of Interest & Restrictions on Membership

7.5.1 Every NUACE member who is in any way directly or indirectly interested in any existing or proposed contract, transaction or arrangement with Nipissing University and the NUACE, or who otherwise has a real or perceived conflict of interest personally, professionally or financially, will declare the interest fully at the NUACE meetings and shall leave the meeting until such time as the conflict matter has been dealt with. Further, the NUACE member will disclose any conflict of interest at the first possible meeting and at every possible meeting when the issue will be discussed.

- 7.5.2 If it is determined by the NUACE that a member has a conflict of interest and did not report the conflict of interest to the NUACE, the member will be removed.
- 7.5.3 No existing or former staff or faculty (who was hired for six months or longer in continuous employment) at Nipissing University may become a voting member of the NUACE.

8.0 Meetings

- 8.1 Two general meetings of the NUACE will be held at appropriate times in the Academic calendar, generally September and April. In between general meetings, working groups may be struck as required from time to time to address particular matters or specific projects and to report to the next scheduled general meeting.
- 8.2 A quorum of the NUACE shall be 60% of the voting members.
- 8.3 Attendance at meetings of the NUACE may be in person or by teleconference.
- 8.4 Three consecutive absences without just cause at meetings will result in the removal of the Member from the NUACE. A letter will be sent from the NUACE Chair to the Member organization advising of the removal with an opportunity to re-establish membership at the NUACE in one year.

9.0 Decision Making

- 9.1. Decisions will be made by consensus. In the event that consensus cannot be reached, decision will be made by a majority vote by those present at the meeting.

9.2 Electronic Voting

- 1. At the discretion, or with the consent, of the Chair, and for matters of an urgent nature, OR time-sensitive matters OR where it would be more expeditious to do so OR when it is not feasible for the NUACE to meet in person or via teleconference, email polling and/or electronic voting may be used to help facilitate decisions of the NUACE in accordance with the following:
 - a. In recognition that decisions are being made using email communication in lieu of a face-to-face meeting, extra effort will be made to ensure that members are provided with sufficient background materials and adequate documentation to support the request for a decision.
 - b. All communication will be shared as a group email with all members copied on correspondence including questions, responses and general commentary. All members will select "reply all" when providing comments so that these will be shared simultaneously with all members and a record will be kept of the email exchange.
 - c. If a resolution is required, the Chair may authorize the Recording Secretary from the Office of Aboriginal Initiatives to conduct an electronic vote of the

members. A clear rationale will be given to the members to explain why a motion is necessary. The question to be answered will be stated clearly in the form of a specific resolution provided for members' consideration. Respondents will be asked to vote upon the resolution.

- d. In the event of an electronic vote, a reasonable and adequate time will be determined for members to respond to the request for a decision. Members will have the opportunity to declare a conflict and not participate in the vote. Every effort will be made to obtain a response from each member (i.e. allow each person to register their vote). The resolution shall be deemed to have been approved only if, by the end of the time period specified, the Recording Secretary has received approval responses from a majority of the voting members.
Non-response to an electronic vote will be considered an abstention. Voting records will be kept.
- e. A resolution approved by email polling and electronic voting, permitted by the Chair and passed by a majority of voting members, shall have the same force and effect as a resolution passed at a regularly constituted meeting of the NUACE.
- f. The Recording Secretary shall prepare a summary document noting the purpose of, and any decisions resulting from, the electronic exchange including any subsequent resolutions.

10.0 Resources

- 10.1 Nipissing University is committed to supporting the NUACE through the provision of assigned human resources and to work with the NUACE to identify additional resources and funding to create stable, sustainable, and continuous programming. The Office of Aboriginal Initiatives will provide a recording secretary for all meetings and additional resources.

11.0 Review

- 11.1 The NUACE will review the Terms of Reference bi-annually.