



## NORQUEST COLLEGE TREATY 6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

NorQuest College acknowledges that we are on the traditional lands, referred to as Treaty 6 Territory and that the City of Edmonton and all the people here are beneficiaries of this peace and friendship treaty. Treaty 6 encompasses the traditional territories of numerous western Canadian First Nations as well as the Métis people who have called this area home for many years. NorQuest College is dedicated to ensuring that the spirit of Treaty 6 is honoured and respected.

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and Institutes

Illustrations by Kalum Teke Dan

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## Message from the Board Chair and the President

NorQuest College is renowned for its unique and inclusive learning environment. Our strategic plan outlines our commitment to improve lives, respond to the needs of our workforce, and enhance the health of the communities we serve. We are committed to an inclusive and student-centred education.

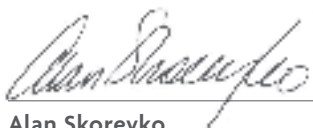
Within our halls one can find a flourishing cultural mosaic: Canada's First Peoples, second and third generation Canadians, and new Canadians.

Canada's Indigenous population is the fastest growing in our society. Edmonton is at the centre of this growth with the fastest growing urban Indigenous population in the country. And yet, this group remains the most under-represented in the workforce, here and across the nation.

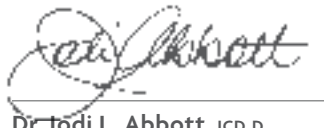
To truly respect the processes of reconciliation and to assure that education—one of the most basic human rights—is available to everyone, we must learn to provide that education wisely and appropriately.

*Wahkôhtowin* is a Cree word that means “everything is related.” You may hear it spoken at NorQuest from time to time. It is this word, combined with other rich lessons learned from our students, partners, and friends that will help us understand that without NorQuest's global community working together, we can achieve little to help those who want to succeed.

NorQuest College is providing that path. Our services and supports span the needs of culture, mentorship, finance, and companionship. And we have so much more to learn and offer. Our resident Elders, available to all NorQuest students, faculty, and staff, offer us regular reminders that *wahkôhtowin* is alive and well at our college. We will follow their knowledge and we will continue to forge new paths to create opportunities and prosperity.



Alan Skoreyko,  
Chair, Board of Governors



Dr. Jodi L. Abbott, ICD.D  
President and CEO

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# Introduction

In Cree culture, the eagle provides an overall guiding vision in life. The eagle is always overhead, watching with great vision, and contemplating ways to look for balance in life. We rely on the eagle to be our guide and to provide us with the vision we need to act as good human beings.

At NorQuest College, the eagle will represent *wahkôhtowin*. It guides us forward and assists us in seeking reconciliation. The Cree wisdom teaching of *wahkôhtowin* shows us enlightened ways of interacting with all who share our community, and guides our work in an ethical manner.

*Wahkôhtowin* is a Cree word that roughly translates to “everything is related.” It is one of the basic principles of Cree Natural Law passed on from generation to generation since time immemorial. In fact, all Indigenous Peoples of North America have a similar concept: everything is interrelated. All of life, including all humans, are connected together in a complex web of relationships, and what happens to any one part of the web of life affects everything else.

It is important for everyone at NorQuest College to fully understand what *wahkôhtowin* means because it is a commitment we must make in our relationships with everybody and everything. *Wahkôhtowin* acts as our guide for life and living, and is kept alive through our interactions with students, stakeholders, community, and everything in our world. Through *wahkôhtowin*, our Indigenization Strategy becomes a living document as our employees demonstrate this wisdom through our relationships. It is important for us to understand that this knowledge and way of living is not meant to be owned, but to be shared with everyone in our community.

Canada is at a turning point in its history of healing our relationship with Indigenous Peoples. As a country, we are only now becoming aware of how out of balance and destructive the relationship has been between Indigenous Peoples and other Canadians. Among many other goals, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission<sup>1</sup> challenges us all to take concrete and meaningful action that transforms the way post-secondary institutions understand, respect, serve, and include Indigenous Peoples, knowledge, and perspectives within the framework of our institutions.

✓ In Cree culture, the eagle is always overhead, watching with great vision and providing guidance.

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<sup>1</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Retrieved from [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca).



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## Introduction

*Miyo-wîcihitowin* refers to the good relationships that we have with one another. If we are able to meet in a good way then something positive will be developed from these relationships. The positive relationships that NorQuest College has are guided by *wahkôhtowin* and if we are committed to this way of knowing, then good relationships form naturally. Understanding that everyone and everything is related innately provides us with the opportunity to form ethical relationships. Our actions on campus and in our community will be done with *miyo-wîcihitowin* as we meet in good faith. This document reflects the commitment of our college to create and sustain a process of mutual learning and building in partnership with Indigenous Peoples. This will lead to the restoration of balance, mutual understanding, and respect between us all.

As an institution of higher learning, NorQuest College is deeply committed to respectfully representing the cultural foundations, historical experiences, richness, and strength of Indigenous capabilities, as well as to addressing the challenges faced by Indigenous learners, families, and communities in the context of Canada today.

We acknowledge there is much work yet to be done, and we need to continue on our journey of finding the healing path to restore balance. We have discovered that denial and minimization of past wrongs has only created deeper wounds. We understand it is imperative that we do the challenging work required to build new and healthier relationships.

NorQuest College is therefore making a concerted effort to focus on decolonization. Our Indigenization Strategy, grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, utilizes Indigenous principles to guide our response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Report and its 94 Calls to Action. The Commission's report urges all levels of government to address the inequalities in public life and private institutions of education, health, commerce, and justice. We are all reflected in its findings, which clearly address how our interconnectedness has impacted the inequalities endured by Indigenous Peoples for far too long. We acknowledge and will strive to effectively address both the historical and contemporary injustices that have undermined the capacities of Indigenous Peoples to feel welcome, safe, and accepted within society, and to take their rightful place as full contributors and co-creators of our country.

- ✓ The Indigenous Relations team inside the Indigenous student centre.

NorQuest College's annual Inclusion Fusion event is a fun example of how we are all related – *wahkôhtowin* in action.





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# The Seven Sacred Teachings: A Holistic Approach

## 1 Peyak: Respect

Reconciliation is about respect. It requires the creation of new relationships and new understandings through *miyo-wícihitowin*. We must engage in a process that is both reciprocal and balanced, and which includes our Indigenous as well as non-Indigenous students, faculty, and community.

Reconciliation within our college:

- respects Indigenous history, worldviews, and knowledge gained from our engagement with Indigenous Elders, experts, community representatives, families, and students
- authentically addresses the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* from the learner, faculty, staff, and leadership perspective; and
- ensures that leadership, staff, and faculty continue to learn from and respectfully engage Indigenous Elders, learners, and community members

## 2 Nîso: Courage

Decolonization requires courage to learn and to teach the truths ignored or denied about the impact of colonization on Indigenous Peoples. It will take time to work with our Indigenous community so they can participate in creating teaching tools and materials that provide an accurate picture of Indigenous history, worldviews, and knowledge. NorQuest will continue to research best practices to enhance our current teaching and learning processes. Honouring and respecting the truth is the foundation of any healthy and sustainable relationship and learning process. It is our intent to be truthful about the history of Canada for all learners to understand.

A courageous curriculum must:

- acknowledge the contribution of Indigenous knowledge and be respectful of Treaty 6 territory
- be respectful of an Indigenous holistic approach to learning
- include Indigenous values such as humility, respect, and love

✓ NorQuest College is enriched by the cultural practices shared every year during National Indigenous Day.



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## The Seven Sacred Teachings: A Holistic Approach

- contribute to the understanding of reconciliation, colonization, and decolonization to enhance relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples
- ensure that Indigenous learners see themselves in the curriculum
- create new capacity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners to work respectfully and effectively in any community because of the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge
- contribute to the achievement and aspirations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners by using more than one worldview, and respecting a holistic perspective; and
- contribute to nation building, through the use of shared worldviews of our Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, and by working together to create social, economic, and cultural development

### 3 Nisto: Truth

Honouring and respecting the truth requires actively and fearlessly investigating reality in search of the truth—first about ourselves and then about the world around us. It also includes being open in mind and heart to recognize and accept the truth as it is discovered. Facing and acknowledging the truth about what has happened in the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Canada is both fundamental and necessary for healing our relationships, decolonization, and reconciliation.

One important area in which seeing and acknowledging the truth is of vital importance is in student supports. For example, to support our students, it is necessary to be truthful about oppression and poverty. There are many systematic and often unconscious forms of oppression that Indigenous Peoples face within educational institutions. NorQuest is committed to identifying and transforming barriers faced by Indigenous learners. To ensure learners are successful, we must first acknowledge that all learners come with prior knowledge, talent, and skills, and we need to utilize these gifts. It is our responsibility to be creative, flexible, and respectful of the gifts that every learner brings to the learning process.

✓ A group of students taking part in a Blanket Ceremony.

Indigenous students benefit from a variety of supports at NorQuest College.





#### 4 Newo: Honesty

Honesty is the foundation of all healthy human relationships. Without honesty, the integrity, strength, and stability of our *wahkôhtowin* (the web of relationships to which we all belong) cannot be preserved. Everything we attempt to do together will be undermined.

Our policies, procedures, and processes need to be aligned with our belief that all learners should feel safe, welcome, and comfortable within NorQuest College, and should be appropriately and effectively supported for student success. Honesty also calls us to look in the mirror, and to recognize there are ways of thinking and doing that persist within our college – things that need to change to advance our decolonization and reconciliation agenda. We need to consider things about ourselves, about the way we interrelate, about our policies and procedures, about our curriculum and programs, and about our governance and decision-making.

To move ourselves along this pathway, we are committed to learning about intercultural competencies and the history of power, privilege, and oppression that have affected our relationship with Indigenous Peoples. To succeed, we will need to humble ourselves to honestly review our policies, processes, and structures, as well as our patterns of thinking and interpretation, and ask ourselves if these are in the best interest of all learners. Then we need to respectfully tell each other the truth and act upon it together.

#### 5 Niyânan: Wisdom

Wisdom can be understood as the living expression of all the Sacred Teachings woven together. Seeking knowledge and understanding in all things, being loving and kind when it is difficult to do so, being prudent and careful in judgement, weighing everything in the balance of experience and in the light of wise teachings, being slow to blame and slower to sever relationships – all of these are expressions of wisdom.

✓ The Community Dialogue on Reconciliation during National Indigenous Day celebrations at NorQuest College in 2017 sparked thoughtful conversations.



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## The Seven Sacred Teachings: A Holistic Approach

When wisdom is applied to our decision-making and governance within our college, it calls for a conscious widening of who has a voice, and which perspectives are represented and respected. Specifically, we are determined to find ways to integrate Indigenous knowledge, wisdom, and perspectives within our decision-making processes. To accomplish this, we are committed to ensuring that Indigenous Peoples are participants at all levels of decision-making within our college and have a strong and influential role in shaping the ongoing development of NorQuest.

Our goal is not only for faculty and staff to have the wisdom required to influence and create respectful governance processes that reflect Indigenous knowledge and culture, but also that our entire NorQuest family will be increasingly aware of Indigenous values and perspectives. We must be open in mind and heart to integrate these values and perspectives into our collective thinking and the ongoing life of our college.

### 6 Nikotwâsik: Love

The Sacred Teaching of Love is also sometimes referred to as caring. Love, in this sense, means reaching out with your heart to others with kindness and positive regard, helping and supporting as needed. Love requires that we rise above self-centredness and habitual attitudes of mind to understand and appreciate what others need. Love is giving of ourselves so that others may flourish and succeed.

The teaching of caring applies to everything that we do, but especially to how our college honours the respectful relationships that occur between learning and compassion. Due to generations of wrongdoings against Indigenous Peoples of Canada, many Indigenous students face poverty, low self-esteem, and have experienced oppression and rejection at almost every turn in their educational journey. Some are struggling with mental health and addictions issues. Many have children of their own, and struggle daily with child care and transportation challenges. Certainly, other non-Indigenous students face similar challenges in their academic journey, but there is an abundance of literature that states a higher proportion of these challenges exist among Indigenous students. In short, students facing these challenges often need much more academic instruction or learning support.

- ✓ Indigenous performers and RBC Indigenous Mentorship students play an important role at NorQuest College events and in everyday life on our campus.

Robin Tremblay, a Métis graduate of NorQuest College's Medical Office Administration program, now manages a busy medical clinic in Edmonton.



NorQuest College is committed to going the extra mile in providing as much support as possible. At the same time, we recognize that there are also many competent community agencies that are led by Indigenous Peoples that have the capacity to support our students on their journey toward success. It is our intention to work collaboratively with our community partners to offer the best possible combination of student supports and services tailored to the needs of our Indigenous learners.

### 7 **Tepakohp: Humility**

Humility means knowing yourself as a sacred part of creation, but no better than anyone else, no matter what your accomplishments may be. Humility is thinking, acting, and speaking humbly, with great respect to every person, and in every circumstance. Humility asks us to remember that the tree holding the most fruit bows lowest to the ground. Humility guides us in our relations with others. A spiritual approach must be taken because a holistic perspective provides the view that spirituality cannot be separated from anything we do. Including a spiritual mindset will keep us grounded, and humble in our relationships and actions.

We recognize that we have much to learn on our journey of decolonization and reconciliation. That is why we are committed to creating a culture within our organization that is characterized by a humble posture of learning. NorQuest College will strive to create growth and continuous improvement in the process of indigenization that challenges us to embrace new ways of thinking, learning, and doing.

For example, this strategy document is really only a record of where we are, at a certain moment in our journey. We recognize that it must be a living document, and that as time goes on, we will continue to learn and our horizons will expand. Wherever that journey takes us, however, NorQuest College is committed to honouring Indigenous worldviews, more deeply understanding Indigenous pedagogies, and supporting the decolonization process as it unfolds within our college and in our country. Through all of this, we are learners finding our way.

✓ Crystal Thompson, a recent NorQuest College graduate, is one of many Indigenous students who have found their voice at NorQuest.

Transition to Employment program student Kevin McDougal works as the social media coordinator for the Alberta Indigenous Construction Career Centre.



## Putting it all Together

The Cree natural law concept of *wahkôhtowin* shows us that there is no “us and them.” All human beings are part of the same family; we are all interconnected. The history of the relationship between Canada and its Indigenous Peoples is clearly one in which our interconnectedness was broken and disrespected by the processes of colonization and oppression, patterns that carry on today in many subtle and not-so-subtle ways. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission challenged post-secondary institutions to create pathways leading to the transformation of the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Canadian society. NorQuest College is responding to that challenge. *Wahkôhtowin* is our guide for understanding the integral relationships; however, *wîcihitowin* is how we conduct our relationships and the way we carry them out.

The Seven Sacred Teachings point the way to how we might work on restoring balance and mutual respect in our relationships. What we are learning is that these teachings need to be combined in their application. For what is honesty without respect, love, and kindness? What use is it to seek truth but lack the courage to honour it? As we apply the concept of *wahkôhtowin* and the Seven Sacred Teachings to the processes of improving student services, transforming policies and practices, integrating Indigenous knowledge and pedagogies into curriculum and programs, and strengthening our decision-making and governance processes, we find that all of the Seven Sacred Teachings need to be applied in each circumstance. We are just beginning to learn how to do this, but we are committed wholeheartedly to the journey.

The following sections outline specific steps that we have already taken, as well as strategic goals and lines of action that we are committed to pursue in the months and years ahead.

- ✓ Orange Shirt Day brings the NorQuest College community together in the spirit of reconciliation and solidarity.



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# Strategic Pathways Moving Forward

## Our Vision and Commitment

NorQuest College will become a champion and facilitator of mutual understanding, respect, and learning between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. We will integrate Indigenous knowledge and wisdom into all aspects of college life. We will become a true friend, supporter, and partner of Indigenous communities and Indigenous students on their learning journey. We will foster a humble posture of learning for continuous improvement within our faculty and staff so that we can fully accomplish what our vision and commitment is calling us to do.

## Seven Strategic Pathways

Our seven strategic pathways are:

1. Indigenous community engagement
2. Curriculum and program development
3. Effective student support
4. Effective policies, procedures, and administrative processes
5. Inclusive governance, decision-making, and staffing
6. Partnerships with community agencies
7. Measurement and learning for continuous improvement

### Strategy One: Indigenous Community Engagement

Honouring the spirit of *wahkôhtowin* and guided by the Seven Sacred Teachings, the following actions have been taken or are planned in relation to the strategy.

1. Respected Indigenous Elders are part of our Indigenization Strategy team.
2. Indigenous leadership and staff guide the implementation of the Indigenization Strategy. A key role of these positions is developing and maintaining relationships in the broader Indigenous community that NorQuest serves.

✓ Elder Delores Cardinal provides advice and counsel to NorQuest College students and staff.

A documentary viewing in the Indigenous student centre as part of Orange Shirt Day 2017.



Strategic Pathways Moving Forward

- 3. An external NorQuest College Indigenous Education Advisory Council, consisting of Indigenous Elders, community members, business, and organizations, has been formed. The council plays a significant role in bridging between our college and important stakeholders within the Indigenous communities in our service area, as well as providing traditionally grounded advice and insights to our ongoing process.
- 4. Consultations will be utilized to inform the ongoing transformative work of indigenization within our college.
- 5. The college will sponsor and host a range of events to honour Indigenous traditions.

**Strategy Two: Curriculum and Program Development**

Acknowledging that we must evolve to constantly learn about Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous pedagogies, the following actions have been taken or are planned in relation to the strategy.

- 1. College stakeholders will work together to advance the Indigenization Strategy.
- 2. *A Pathway to Integrity and Hope*<sup>2</sup>, a best practice review, will guide curriculum reform and development.
- 3. Program and curriculum transformation is and will be undertaken. This includes indigenization of the Social Work and the Community Support Worker programs, Indigenous Studies courses, and a bridging program to help learners prepare themselves for student success in more advanced college work.
- 4. Based on consultations with Indigenous professionals and community leaders, specialized new programs will take into context such issues as community economic development, community healing, youth development, elder care, child care, early childhood education, governance, public sector management, community health, community justice, community environmental protection, community housing management, and others.

✓ 1000 Women Chair Sheila Witwicky, Brittney Whitford and her daughter Brooklyn, and NorQuest College president and CEO Dr. Jodi L. Abbott at the 2017 1000 Women: A Million Possibilities luncheon.

Many of NorQuest College’s Indigenous students, such as Natasha Hines, spoke passionately about Canada 150 and presented a different perspective to the national celebrations.

<sup>2</sup> The Four Worlds Centre for Development Learning. (March 2016). *Indigenization: A Pathway to Integrity and Hope; A Literature Review in Support of NorQuest’s Indigenization Strategy.*



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## Strategic Pathways Moving Forward

Our college is in the process of learning from the experiment to find ways to improve the effectiveness of its academic support services for Indigenous learners. This is a work in progress that we must evaluate to show success.

5. Libraries have been viewed as propagating erroneous information about Indigenous Peoples of Canada and, at the very least, not containing adequate and true depictions of the history and stories of Indigenous Peoples of Canada. NorQuest College has started to examine and update its resources of Indigenous works and will ensure representation from Indigenous authors.
6. Given the current higher rates of Indigenous Peoples in correctional facilities, NorQuest College is uniquely positioned to influence programming in these facilities.
7. To the fullest extent possible, all of this work will be guided and implemented by Indigenous Elders, scholars, faculty members, staff, and community resource people in full collaboration with the rest of the college.

### Strategy Three: Effective Student Support

In recognition that many Indigenous students face significant social and economic barriers to student success, the following steps are underway or planned.

1. NorQuest College employees with partners will advance the Indigenization Strategy.
2. NorQuest College with partners will develop a comprehensive Indigenous student support plan.
3. NorQuest College will strive to link its student support services to existing community support networks within local Indigenous communities.
4. NorQuest College will establish Indigenous student centres at the main Edmonton campus and at the Wetaskiwin campus.
5. Given that child care and transportation needs are critical to student success, NorQuest College will examine these matters, especially at our Wetaskiwin campus where needs are high. At the Edmonton campus, students have access to the 1000 Women Child Care Centre.

✓ The Bull family from Maskwacis have all benefitted from a NorQuest College education, taking courses as a family at the Wetaskiwin campus.



6. The RBC Indigenous Mentorship Program serves as a focal point for the collective identity of Indigenous students at the main NorQuest campus. NorQuest College will examine the potential of expansion to the Wetaskiwin campus.
7. NorQuest College will continue to build on our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Summer Youth Leadership program as a mechanism to introduce prospective students to post-secondary education.
8. NorQuest College will continue its employee development focused on understanding the impacts of intergenerational trauma, marginalization, and Indigenous cultural awareness. The college is embarking on a process that elevates the importance of cultural competencies, including the creation of an in-depth understanding of contemporary Indigenous issues and challenges.

**Strategy Four: Effective Policies, Procedures, and Administrative Processes**

Policies and procedures facilitate the smooth running of an institution. In order to enhance understanding and remove barriers to education for Indigenous students, policies and procedures will be guided through consultations with Indigenous stakeholders.

This work will be guided by the Seven Sacred Teachings, which will bring a perspective that balances administrative priorities with human needs.

In addition to the implemented Treaty 6 territory acknowledgement, the following actions are underway or planned in relation to the strategy.

1. Various individuals across the college have been focusing on examining policies, procedures, and administrative processes. The group has been working steadily to make improvements since early 2015. This strategy requires an issue-by-issue, incremental change process by:
  - bridging NorQuest policies and procedures with federal government and community guidelines
  - increasing employee awareness of service needs of Indigenous learners
  - ongoing Indigenous awareness training for all employees

✓ As part of the Human Library at NorQuest College, Social Work graduate, Jeff Chalifoux was a human “book”.

Indigenous students enjoying the Bannock Bake-Off.





2. In the past few years, the college has made Indigenous awareness training a priority for all employees. Through ongoing training, all employees must also learn more about the realities and needs of contemporary Indigenous Peoples and communities. This includes trauma-informed practice, the consequences of poverty and marginalization, and the challenges Indigenous students face related to wellness, child care, transportation, and dependency on often arbitrary government funding programs. Our intention is to create a process of continuous improvement of services and systems through learning, planning, action, and measurement.

### Strategy Five: Inclusive Governance, Decision-making, and Staffing

We recognize that our commitment to fully integrate Indigenous knowledge, wisdom, and perspectives into our decision-making and governance processes cannot be accomplished without the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples into those processes. If we are to truly honour the concept of our interrelatedness (i.e., our *wahkôhtowin*) as guided by the Seven Sacred Teachings, integration has to go far beyond placing a few Indigenous representatives on councils and committees. Full and balanced participation of Indigenous Peoples, and the integration of Indigenous thinking into the ongoing life and decision-making of the college is going to require mutual learning, experimentation, and evaluation. The following steps have been taken or are planned in order to achieve this.

1. An Indigenous lead guides the Indigenization Strategy, with support from across the institution including Indigenous staff, Elders, and department heads.
2. The college is informed by an external Indigenous Education Advisory Council to guide and support the implementation of the Indigenization Strategy.
3. Given the population that NorQuest serves, we welcome diversity of culture, race, age, gender, sexual orientation, background, education, and experience. Historically and currently, NorQuest has had Indigenous members on the Board of Governors. With this in mind, the Board will continue to endeavor to recruit and recommend qualified Indigenous members.
4. NorQuest College has endorsed and is committed to following the Indigenous Education Protocol developed by Colleges and Institutes Canada (see Appendix A).

✓ The Indigenous student centre offers a safe and welcoming space to one and all.

RBC Indigenous Mentorship Program ambassadors volunteer at the 1000 Women: A Million Possibilities luncheon in 2016.



5. NorQuest is building collaborative partnerships with the leadership and education departments of Indigenous communities across our service area. The purpose is to create mechanisms for these communities to influence and guide course and program development, suggest improvements related to student success and student services, help to improve policies and procedures, and support the process of indigenization.
6. A bilateral stakeholder consultation process will be held to contribute to our collective understanding and further the evolution of the Indigenization Strategy. As we learn more, continuous improvement to our actions will occur.
7. We understand that ongoing learning needs to be integrated into management and governance processes. As we reflect upon the implementation of the Indigenization Strategy, we must continue to learn from experience, as well as from strategic learning inputs, and continuously improve what we are doing.
8. In order to Indigenize the college, we are committed to developing a focused Indigenous staffing initiative.

**Strategy Six: Partnership with Community Agencies**

The Seven Sacred Teachings call us to care for one another within our NorQuest family. But we are also called to humility. NorQuest College fully recognizes that we will continue to learn and evolve. Our long-range goal will be to develop capacities that are needed to fully implement our Indigenization Strategy.

The following are some of the steps we have taken or plan to take in relation to the strategy.

- Explore and expand child care offerings for our Indigenous students.
- Enable Indigenous world views in the wellness journey of our learners.
- Develop transportation options for our learners.
- Create employment oppportunities, such as the Alberta Indigenous Construction Career Centre for our learners.
- Work with Indigenous communities and agencies to reduce poverty and ensure student success.

✓ NorQuest College's Indigenous Youth Summer Leadership program is designed for Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit youth, as well as other students interested in learning about Indigenous cultures.



### Strategy Seven: Measurement and Learning for Continuous Improvement

If we are *respectful* of the guidance we have received from Indigenous Elders and advisors; if we are *truthful* about the complexity and difficulty of the path we have set for ourselves; if we are *honest* with ourselves about our own strengths, but also our own shortcomings; and if we are *humble* and *courageous* enough to face the difficult path of change in partnership with Indigenous people and communities—if all of those things come to pass—only then will we achieve our vision and fulfill our commitment. We realize that accomplishing this will take strong and committed leadership.

The following steps have been taken or are planned in relation to the strategy.

1. A basic Indigenous awareness and training program is offered to all college employees.
2. An Indigenization Strategy Learning Plan, linked to the specific performance and outcome targets of the Indigenization Strategy, will be updated regularly.
3. The implementation of the Indigenization Strategy will be integrated into the work plans of all departments across the institution.
4. An Indigenization Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation Plan will be developed and outcomes responded to by the NorQuest College Board of Governors.
5. Stakeholder conversations will occur on a regular basis in the college.
6. We will monitor our activities and actions to reflect a balance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews.

✓ NorQuest College's annual Indigenous Achievement Ceremony highlights amazing students who are completing their journeys at NorQuest.



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## Summary: The Sacred Tree of Life

We began with the Cree concept of *wahkôhtowin* and the Seven Sacred Teachings that can guide us to a healthy and balanced relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the rest of Canada. The image of the Sacred Tree of Life is utilized by many Indigenous people to talk about how all parts of the tree of the human family are interdependent. The growth and well-being of the tree depends on the flourishing of all parts of the tree. The roots, trunk, leaves, branches, flower, and fruit all have their function, and all of these functions are interrelated. If any one part of the tree is damaged or prevented from making its contribution to the whole, then the tree cannot flourish.

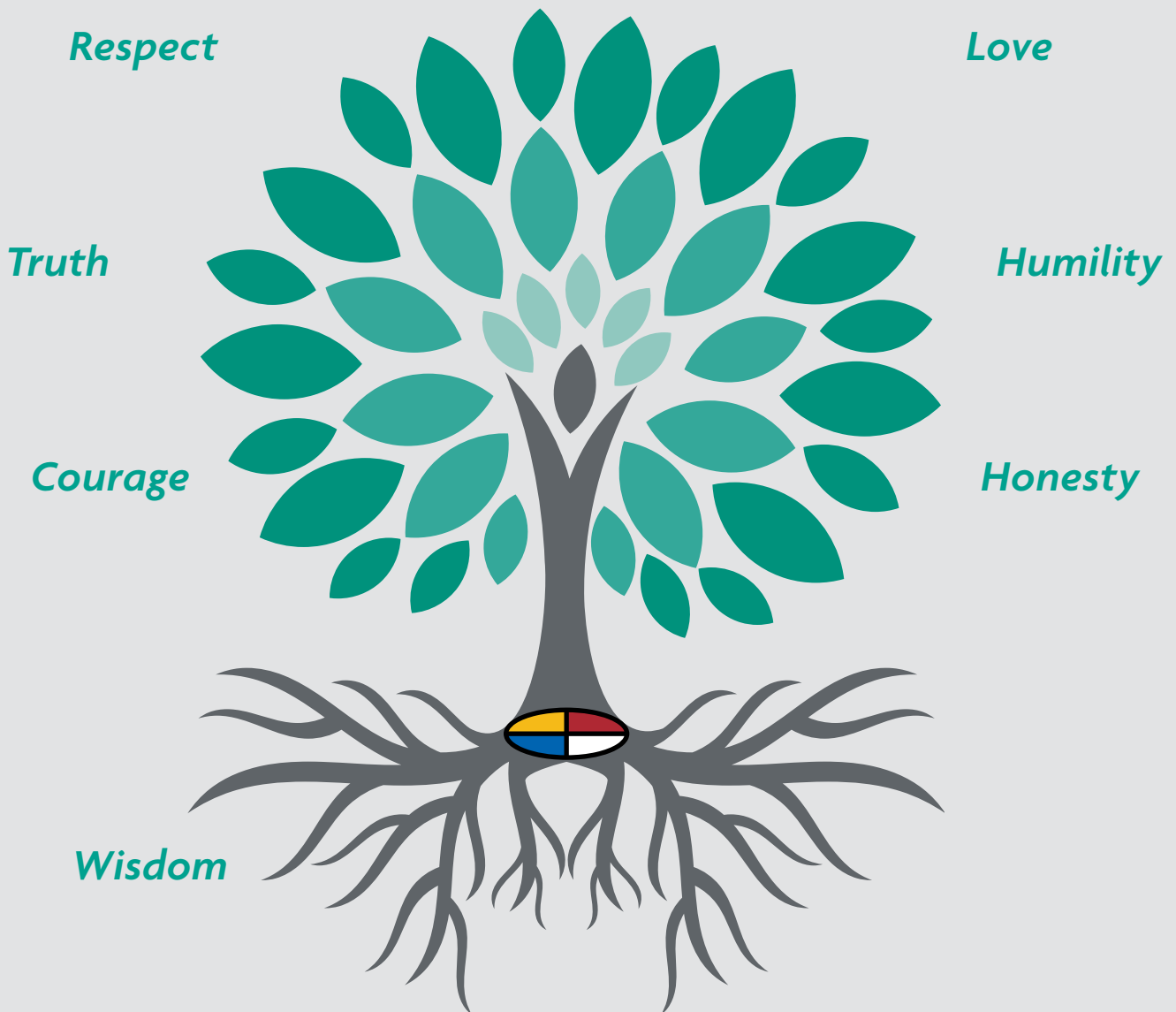
**Similarly, we are learning that a true and respectful partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous collaborators can result in much better outcomes for all of us, both within the life of our college, and for Canada as a still-emerging nation.**

The fundamental truth we have discovered is that as we get our relationships right, the rest falls into place.

- ✓ A diverse group of NorQuest College students at the grand opening of the Singhmar Centre for Learning.



THE TREE OF OUR WAHKÔHTOWIN





### 3. Implement intellectual and cultural traditions of Indigenous Peoples through curriculum and learning approaches relevant to learners and communities.

Exemplary practices for implementing this principle include:

- Transition and upgrading programs;
- Build linkages and partnerships between K-12 and post-secondary education systems, including the availability of dual-credit options between colleges/institutes and high schools;
- Integrate Indigenous-focused upgrading programs or modules into standard provincial upgrading programs;
- Offer flexibility in the delivery of transition programs to allow adult learners to pause and restart programs as required due to family, community, or work obligations; and
- Use culturally relevant assessment tools, which may differ for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit learners.
- College and institute curriculum:
  - Capture and reflect history, including oral history, as understood by Indigenous Peoples, across curriculum;
  - Promote and support the preservation of Indigenous languages;
  - Embed intellectual and cultural traditions of Indigenous Peoples;
  - Combine educational pedagogy and epistemology infused with Elder/Métis/Senator knowledge;
  - Confront the legacy of residential schools, recognizing the challenge of institutional settings and supporting healing and reconciliation; and
  - Recognize that Indigenous knowledge can benefit all learners (e.g. environment, justice) and have processes for two-way sharing (e.g. both scientific and traditional ways).
- Learning approaches:
  - Offer flexibility in program and course delivery, and allow for stop-out and start-up options;
  - Develop and deliver community-based education and training programs that are aligned with the economic, social development, and labour market needs of Indigenous communities, recognizing that First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Peoples are distinct and that their communities will differ in terms of the education programs required;
  - Legitimize traditional knowledge by giving post-secondary credits for this knowledge, as for other skills and areas of expertise.





- Offer culturally relevant assessment services:
  - Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) services to recognize traditional knowledge base and life experience of learners;
  - English/French and math skills assessments must recognize the English or French gap for Indigenous language speakers, and allow more time to complete to support success.
- Change the symbolism that exists throughout the institution so that it is more respectful and inclusive of Indigenous ways and increases visibility of Indigenous culture through gathering spaces, gardens, signage, art work, and ceremonies.
- Move from a safe space to a safe campus approach by ensuring that culture, language, and Elder/Métis Senator involvement is not compartmentalized and is visible and viable across all aspects of the institution and students' experiences.
- Offer Indigenous-centred support services to address the needs of learners holistically and guided by the wisdom and leadership of Elders/Métis Senators, including:
  - Elder/Métis Senator services from the community or in residence;
  - housing, child care, and transportation;
  - tutoring and learning supports;
  - health care and mental health counselling;
  - mentorships and role models from alumni and graduating students;
  - career and employment counselling; and
  - activities structured around family.
- Ensure support services are multi-pronged to meet the diverse needs of Indigenous people: urban, rural, Status, Non-Status, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit.
- Integrate systems and provisions to eliminate financial barriers for Indigenous students including:
  - sponsored seats;
  - funds for participation in upgrading programs;
  - financial assistance, including bursaries and scholarships;
  - partnership funding to host visits, meetings, and events;
  - base funding allocation by the institution to minimize dependency on soft funding;
  - waive tuition for children in care;
  - differentiated funding models within institutions to account for smaller enrolment.

**7. Build relationships and be accountable to Indigenous communities in support of self-determination through education, training, and applied research.**

Exemplary practices for implementing this principle include:

- Formalize college and institute partnerships with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities, Indigenous institutes of higher learning and Indigenous organizations such as Friendship Centres and Métis Community Councils, recognizing the equal partnership status.
- Identify community needs in an open and genuine consultation approach including :
  - how the community wants to work with the college/institute;
  - the content of the education and training programs; and
  - delivery approaches and locations.
- Ensure college/institute partnerships with Indigenous communities are responsive to economic development and labour market needs by:
  - Fostering opportunities for community-college-industry engagement and joint projects; and
  - Supporting entrepreneurship and business development in Indigenous communities.
- Develop and share curriculum on governance of Indigenous communities and build a deeper knowledge, understanding, and appreciation around self-governance and self-determination.
- Support Indigenous community sustainability by offering community-based programs that address industry and environmental concerns.



