

FIRST NATIONS UNIVERSITY OF CANADA KEHTE-AYAK COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2022 – 2023

About us:

One of the most vital part of our university community is the **Kehte-ayak Council**, which includes Elders, Elders' Helpers, and Knowledge Keepers on each of our three campuses in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. The council is the spiritual and traditional knowledge heart of the First Nations University of Canada, and provides guidance



on everything from the incorporation of ceremony in our programming to cultural supports for our students, as well as the integration of Indigenous knowledge in our university programming. In addition to the support of our administration and academic staff, Elders provide critical support and counselling to our students – offering them a spiritual safe space and crucial guidance as they work their way through challenging and rewarding academic programs.

Our Elders are an integral part of our university community. As the holders of our traditions, values, languages, and history, they are our leaders, guides, teachers, and encourage what is best for our institution. Our Elders also lead conversations about the big questions facing our university, providing both cultural wisdom and lived experience to help our administration and staff meet the needs of our students and communities in an ever-evolving and changing world.

Established in 2015, the mandate of the Kehte-ayak Council is to provide guidance and advice, give direction, and share important cultural teachings and protocols pertaining to FNUniv programming and activities. The Council's role is to sit together and find ways to work for the benefit of the university and students.

The Elders support students and aid them in maintaining or developing connections to culture while also managing the pressures of their university education and family commitments. The Elders also assist faculty in incorporating traditional knowledge, teachings, and concepts into their classrooms and online course development. Our Elders work tirelessly with students, staff and community with ceremonies, celebrations, pow wows, land-based learning, culture camps, research projects, and forums. One will find elder representatives at every venue within our university.

As a university community, our Elders are essential, keeping us grounded in our traditional ways of knowing and ensuring we always remain connected to our culture and community.

What do we do:

The Kehte-ayak Council meets three times a year and are often called to attend special events and meetings throughout the year. Since 2015, the Kehte-Ayak Council has participated in countless event and tackled some of the most pressing issues and questions facing our university community. The 2022-2023 academic year was no different.

May 2022 Prince Albert

A special sweat & feast ceremony was held at the Sturgeon Lake First Nations for the Traditional Campus Naming ceremony. Nēwoskān is the given name, meaning Wholeness with a reference to unity, a collective of life itself. It also means four bones or family but translates to wholeness.



The final updates on the NCCIE videos were provided. A special presentation on Medicinal Plants project was given by Dr. Vincent Ziffle.

September 2022 Regina

We welcomed our new Kehte-ayak Council Elders Margaret Rockthunder and Dennis Omeasoo to our Regina Campus! They are a great addition to the Council, and we look forward to their contributions.

Our Elders were introduced to new staff members, were updated on new programming, and introduced to a new initiative on 2SLGBT. There was a discussion and proposal to acknowledge Elders helpers (driving assistants) and finally, a tour to see Radical Stitch Exhibition at the Mackenzie Art Gallery.

February 2023 Saskatoon

Highlights from the meeting included the annual medicine tobacco mixing which provides tobacco for ceremonies at all three campuses. They had their largest virtual faculty/instructor open space for queries and feedback that went very well. There were additional presentations that included an update on the elder science project, innovative ideas were shared and discussed on Indigenous Advising Theory. The Elder's Handbook initiative consultation process began.

March 2023 - Saskatoon

The Elders engaged in a transgender workshop with Jack Saddleback, a result of the 2SLGBT initiative. The premise of the initiative is that the education and engagement begin with the

elders prior to moving through faculty, staff, and students. There was also an opportunity to engage and participate in the National Indigenous Forum in Regina.

May 2023 – Prince Albert

We held our annual sweat lodge and feast at Nēwoskān. There were updates on a couple of research initiatives and an opportunity to partake in the NC Cultural Retreat which provided an opportunity to interact with staff and faculty.

September 2023 – Saskatoon

Kehte-ayak Council was held in Saskatoon so to partake in the Indigenous Social Work Celebration.

October 2023 – Saskatoon

2SLGBTQ Workshop – Janet Smylie & Nancy Cooper

November 2023 – Edmonton

Our Kehte-ayak Council had an opportunity, through external funding, to attend the National Elders Gathering in Edmonton. It was a gathering of approximately 5000 elders to share ideas and discuss issues around culture and language revitalization, reconciliation, missing and murdered Indigenous women and climate change.

In Memoriam:

We would like to take a moment to acknowledge the passing of three of our Kehte-ayak Council elders who passed on in 2023. Elders Florence Allen (Prince Albert) Audrey Cochrane (Regina) and Rose Bird (Prince Albert) were called home this year after having contributed so much to our university, our staff, our students, and our larger communities. They will be dearly missed, but we will always remember their teachings.

