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Truth and Reconciliation Framework

Time for Action, 2024-2029

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**University
of Manitoba**



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Purpose

The University of Manitoba (UM) has an ongoing commitment to Reconciliation and recognizing and taking action to address past and on-going harms. As the home to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, UM carries an obligation to move Reconciliation forward. UM aspires to be the national leader for advancing Reconciliation and through that, supporting Indigenous self-determination.

To achieve such a goal, this university—and each of us—must be agents of change. We must all promote, support and work in good ways with the Indigenous community at UM and beyond.

Building on the decades of work led by Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, students, faculty, staff and community members, significant progress has been made in the past few years to address organizational and structural gaps and barriers at UM. While progress has been made, there is still much work to be done.

Using the *Indigenous Senior Leadership Report and Recommendations* and the *MOMENTUM: Leading Change Together 2024-2029* plan as guides, the *Truth and Reconciliation Framework* provides the high-level context to champion a university-wide Reconciliation Implementation Plan in 2025, which will drive UM's commitment of advancing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action and integrating Indigenous ways of knowing into what we do.

Informed by community consultations, this framework serves as both a guiding document for ongoing commitment to working with Indigenous students, faculty and staff, and as a foundational guide for academic and administrative units to develop their own Reconciliation action plans.

We all have a role to play to move Reconciliation forward. Together, we will move from talking about Reconciliation to actioning Reconciliation, and creating systemic and structural changes to ensure Indigenous perspectives are valued and included.

For this framework, the Advisory Committee is informed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) description of Reconciliation:

Reconciliation seeks to establish and maintain a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, which requires an awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been and continues to be inflicted, atonement and justice¹ for the causes and action to change behaviour. It is a collective responsibility that requires the active participation of our entire community.

¹ While the word "justice" does not appear in the TRC's description of Reconciliation, the Advisory Committee felt strongly that that Reconciliation cannot occur without addressing justice.



What guides the framework

Territory Acknowledgement

The UM campuses are located on original lands of Anishinaabeg, Ininewak, Anisininewuk, Dakota Oyate and Dene, and on the National Homeland of the Red River Métis.

UM respects the Treaties that were made on these territories, acknowledges the harms and mistakes of the past and present, and dedicates itself to move forward in partnership with Indigenous communities in a spirit of Reconciliation and collaboration. The UM Territory Acknowledgement continues to evolve as we learn more and strive to do better.

UM recognizes that this acknowledgment only holds meaning when reflected in the actions taken to address the injustices and barriers that have disproportionately affected Indigenous Peoples and communities, systemically preventing them from accessing and benefitting from education. Grateful for the territories and lands on which the university community learns, conducts research, and engages with external partners, UM is guided by this acknowledgment in carrying out the core work of its mission, the priorities it sets, and the decisions made to move forward as an institution.

Framework Vision

The framework sets out the **vision to promote mino-bimaadiziwin and mino-ayawin as integral values of the University of Manitoba.**

Mino-bimaadiziwin is often translated simply as “the good life,” or “living well.” More deeply, this ethic concerns living a life embedded in reciprocal care and respect for others that is mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually balanced. It involves **izhichigewin**, which means “taking action,” and **gidakiiminaan**, which means “understanding the web of relationships between all beings as well as with the land, and our own roles and responsibilities in these relationships.”

Mino-ayawin, or “being in good health,” is key to **mino-bimaadiziwin**, as being healthy in body and mind is essential for living a balanced life in good relationships with others and for oneself. Promoting these concepts as core values of our university, and embedding them in how we educate students, advance cutting-edge research and conduct business, means thinking about success in a comprehensive framework that supports the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of our university community members. It means recognizing that all things at our university are related – **gidakiiminaan** – and that the good life – **mino-bimaadiziwin** – is not possible without taking action – **izhichigewin**.

Framework Mission

Make UM an institution enriched by Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. We will be a university of choice for Indigenous Peoples where they can not only learn and work, but belong.

We must encourage, enable and build a culture at UM that that addresses the need for justice and action and that creates working and learning environments in which Indigenous students, faculty and staff are respected, valued and have a sense of belonging that allows them to thrive.



How we got here

“Education is the key to reconciliation. Education got us into this mess, and education will get us out of it.”
Senator Murray Sinclair

Understanding the Truth

Truth requires accepting that colonialism has been a reality in North America and is the foundation of many of the systems that guide our society, including UM’s structures. We must learn about and understand the truths that Indigenous Peoples have experienced, from residential schools to policies designed to erase their historical and contemporary diversity, cultures, knowledges, languages, rights and even existence.

Manitoba has the largest Indigenous population of all provinces in Canada, and Winnipeg has the largest urban Indigenous population of any city in Canada. Therefore, embedding truth and Reconciliation along with strong, respectful, reciprocal relationships in all we do at UM is critical in a province where our students – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous – will graduate where one in five coworkers, customers, clients, patients, supervisors and business owners is Indigenous.

Timeline of Truth and Reconciliation at UM

1877	Endowment (\$100,000) contributed by graduate Alexander Kennedy Isbister (Métis Lawyer) for the education of students of both sexes without distinction of race, creed or nationality
1879	First UM graduate Reginald William Gunn, Métis, earned a degree with honours in Natural Sciences
1970	IMESA (Indigenous Student Association) was founded
1972	First Pow Wow at UM
1973	First Indigenous course offered
1975	Department of Native Studies established UMAP (UM Access Program) established for northern, Indigenous, and newcomer students
1978	J.A. Hildes Northern Medical Unit ² serving northern First Nations and Nunavut established
1990	First Graduation Pow Wow
1996	The Aboriginal Student Centre opened in University Centre

² Now Ongomiizwin



2000	First Indigenous student recruitment officer hired Indigenous Studies establishes MA degree program
2005	Centre for Aboriginal Health Education established for students in the five professional health degree programs William Norrie Centre constructed using Indigenous design principles
2008	Migizii Agamik opens
2010	Indigenous Studies Doctoral Program established
2011	First Executive Lead for Indigenous Achievement
2015	Opening of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at UM and release of the TRC's final report and 94 Calls to Action UM becomes signatory of the Manitoba Collaborative Indigenous Education Blueprint
2016	Indigenous Initiatives Fund launched Indigenous Scholar Hire program launched
2017	First Vice-Provost (Indigenous Engagement)
2020	First Vice-President (Indigenous) and Office of the Vice-President (Indigenous) established
2021	Land blessing ceremony at site of future NCTR permanent building at UM

Community engagement

The Office of the Vice-President (Indigenous) (OVPI) formed a team in fall 2022 following recommendations from UM's Indigenous Senior Leadership Report. The goal of the team was to lead an engagement process to inform the development of a university-wide plan for Reconciliation.

The team organized three large-scale sessions, bringing together a range of collaborators, including Elders, UM Indigenous students, senior leaders, faculty, staff and Indigenous community members. They kicked off with talks about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action. Participants were asked to share broad, university-wide goals, visions, ideas and needs to address the holistic experiences of Indigenous students, faculty and staff. Participants were also encouraged to consider the intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects of working and learning at the UM.

Other recent university reports, many which responded to the Indigenous Senior Leadership recommendations, were also vital in shaping this process. The thoughts and suggestions from those reports were echoed by the participants in the community engagement sessions, contributing to the development of the Reconciliation plan. You can find the reports, which each held their own engagement sessions, on the [OVPI's reporting page](#).



Reconciliation Advisory Committee

Equipped with valuable insights from the community engagement sessions, the Vice-President (Indigenous) assembled an advisory committee comprised of UM students, faculty and staff with the specific mandate of identifying guiding themes for inclusion in this framework. The advisory committee further refined ideas from those generated during the engagement sessions and identified overarching themes for the framework.

The committee's work began with a meaningful Ceremony led by Knowledge Keeper Leslie Spillett. To start the work in a good way, each advisory committee member shared their personal connection to the work and emphasized its significance. Through emotional and powerful exchanges, a shared set of values emerged, providing guidance for the committee's work ahead. At the start of each meeting, committee members were reminded of the shared values.

Our work is guided by **Ceremony** and **Friendship** and shared values that reflect:

- Reconciliation is about **Relationships** and **Truth**.
- That this is “**Heart**” work that requires **Courage** and **Humility**.
- That this work is **Personal** and built on mutual **Trust** and **Respect**.
- Indigenous Knowledge values of **Common sense**, **Practicality** and **Reasoning** (as articulated by the late Roger Roulette, Knowledge Keeper, Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation).

Walking Together in Reconciliation

Reconciliation cannot be accomplished in isolation. It is part of system change built with Indigenous knowledge and the understanding that Indigenous Peoples do not need to reconcile with themselves. In the Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould's book, *True Reconciliation*, she writes about the definition of Reconciliation as how two people or a group of people have had a disagreement and now, they're trying to make amends to get back to a proper relationship.

Wilson-Raybould believes there are three core practices of true Reconciliation: learn, understand and act. She says, “it's the responsibility of everybody in their own spheres of influence to play the role that they can and to learn and understand. Then, based on that, act.”

What that truly means for UM and both its internal and external community is that we're making space, learning from Indigenous Peoples, and changing how each of us holds Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

We—students, faculty and staff—each have a responsibility to move forward to enact the change we want to see. Reconciliation does not mean relying on the Indigenous community to do all the work. As partners, it means that non-Indigenous peoples must reconcile themselves to the fact that they must do the work if we are to break down the colonial systems that create barriers for Indigenous peoples. Through our collective efforts, UM can cultivate an environment of mutual respect and understanding, paving the way for meaningful Reconciliation. This is a process that requires continuous effort, open dialogue and a commitment to transformative change from all UM students, faculty, staff and leadership to address the injustices, prejudice, violence, systemic racism and discrimination that Indigenous peoples in this country continue to face³.

³ <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/en/resources/reconciliation-means-taking-action>



Where we want to be

Within our university community, each segment – whether a faculty, college, school or administrative unit – is on its own unique journey towards Reconciliation. Some may be in the initial stages of understanding and acknowledging truths, while others may have already developed action plans or be implementing specific initiatives.

Regardless of where you are in your journey, the intent of this framework is to support your work. It provides a common ground, guiding collective efforts to align with broader Reconciliation objectives and promote the vision of *mino-bimaadiziwin* and values such as Verna Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt's (2001) and Jean Paul Restoule's (2008) respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility and relationships.

Combined with *MOMENTUM: Leading Change Together 2024-2029*, academic and administrative units are encouraged to use this framework to align their objectives with these overarching Reconciliation themes:

- Create a Sense of Belonging: Recruitment and Retention
- Integrate Indigenous Ways of Knowing: Policies, practices, language and research
- Empower Learning: Curriculum, programs and cultural safety awareness
- Indigenizing spaces, places and supports

Examples of actions within this framework include incorporating Indigenous perspectives into curriculum, providing culturally appropriate training for non-Indigenous people, and developing Reconciliation action plans tailored to each academic or administrative unit's unique context and needs.

UM's *Truth and Reconciliation Framework* serves as a guide for academic and administrative units to contribute to Reconciliation efforts. By developing their own action plans aligned with this framework, academic and administrative units play a crucial role in promoting respect for Indigenous histories, traditions, languages and cultures within the university community. Their active participation and innovation are essential for the success of UM's Reconciliation efforts.



Actions Underway

Based on the recommendations from the [Indigenous Senior Leadership report](#), projects were created in six themed areas with leads representing all areas of UM to maximize senior leadership support. This approach has project team actions sharing the Reconciliation efforts. Each of the following projects have related deliverables and continuing commitments:

Project	Executive Sponsor
1. Governance and Leadership	President and University Secretary
2. Indigenous Leadership and Community	VP (Indigenous)
3. Faculty Partners for Reconciliation	Provost & VP (Academic)
4. Supportive Environment for Indigenous UM	VP (Admin)
5. Recognizing Indigenous Change-Makers	VP (External Relations)
6. Research that is Respectful of Indigenous People	VP (Research and International)

How we get there: Advancing Reconciliation

Principles

A Five Rs approach to Indigenizing UM's systems and structures pays homage to Verna Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt's (2001) and Jean Paul Restoule's (2008) work in Indigenous education. The Five Rs approach recognizes the need for the principles of **respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility and relationship** to be applied to work with Indigenous communities and ways of knowing in change processes. To ensure that Indigenous ways of being are reflected across UM, each of the Rs—**that learning be respectful of Indigenous peoples and ways of knowing, relevant to Indigenous students and communities, reciprocal, and responsible to Indigenous relationships and ethical approaches** must be applied.

Reconciliation is a journey, not a destination. Transforming UM's spaces, systems, and structures to better reflect Indigenous ways will require time, active engagement with Indigenous communities and collaboration to prepare UM graduates to be forward-thinking leaders. To put Reconciliation into action at UM, participants at the initial engagement sessions articulated dozens of innovative ideas, goals and visions captured by the following themes and actions:



1. Create a Sense of Belonging: Recruitment and retention

Attracting and retaining Indigenous students, faculty and support staff involves fostering an equitable, respectful and supportive environment that creates a sense of belonging. In the UM community engagement sessions, it was noted that Indigenous students, faculty and staff often encounter challenges that undermine their sense of belonging and support, rooted in systemic issues like insufficient resources for Indigenous students, underrepresentation of Indigenous staff and faculty, and a lack of culturally responsive policies.

Actively recruiting Indigenous students, faculty and staff is an intentional effort to invite them to share their unique perspectives, which will enrich our campuses with diverse experiences. Incorporating Indigenous knowledge and traditions enhances our understanding, challenges colonial structures and promotes more culturally informed and inclusive learning and working environments. However, recruitment is just the beginning; retention is crucial. Retention reflects our university's ability to cultivate an environment where Indigenous students, faculty and staff feel valued, respected, supported and included.

Recruitment and retention efforts are part of a broader commitment to engage respectfully with Indigenous Peoples.

Sub-Themes:

In advancing Reconciliation, UM will acknowledge truths, learn from Indigenous knowledge, address systemic inequities and create a supportive environment where Indigenous students, faculty and staff feel a genuine sense of belonging through Indigenized:

- [Student recruitment and retention practices](#)
- [Faculty recruitment and retention practices](#)
- [Support staff recruitment and retention practices](#)

Initial actions:

- Improve our understanding of the demographic and geographic composition of Indigenous students, faculty and staff.
- Share more students, faculty and staff success stories.
- Continue to enhance communication and relationship-building with Indigenous education leaders.
- Create a repository to capture existing and future ideas to advance Reconciliation.



2. Integrate Indigenous Ways of Knowing: Policies, practices, language and research

Indigenous ways of knowing involves embracing the richness and diversity of Indigenous approaches to teaching and learning into UM's systems and structures. Acknowledging the validity and variety of Indigenous ways of knowing effectively reshapes our learning and working environment and demands their integration into policies, practices, research, governance, support systems and decision-making processes. This will require rethinking university knowledge systems to remove barriers that prevent incorporating Indigenous knowledges.

Indigenous ways of knowing are also deeply intertwined with Indigenous languages, shaping the approach to education and understanding. Participants in the engagement sessions emphasized the importance of supporting Indigenous language revitalization through courses, teacher training and micro-credentials. Through language revitalization, UM can honour and preserve Indigenous knowledges while also fostering a more inclusive work and learning environment.

As well, Indigenous research methods challenge traditional western approaches by prioritizing community involvement, including Knowledge Keepers, Elders and youth. This framework advocates for integrating Indigenous perspectives into research methodologies, respecting community data ownership and sovereignty.

Sub-Themes:

In advancing Reconciliation, UM will communicate expectations to students, faculty and staff, build relationships with Indigenous communities and work with Indigenous communities to create opportunities for capacity-building, to support self-determination and to reflect Indigenous knowledges through:

- Culturally responsive policies and practices
- Language revitalization
- Anti-oppression knowledge, for non-Indigenous researchers, related to Indigenous histories

Initial actions:

- Safeguard opportunities for Indigenous students, faculty and staff through a university-wide policy and procedures on Indigenous identity.
- Develop, resource and implement a Respectful Rematriation and Repatriation Ceremony Policy and Wise Practices (Procedures).
- Consultation process to inform a process for evaluating the ethics of Indigenous Research projects involving Human Ethics (FG)
- Identify ways to support Indigenous language teaching and learning.



3. Empower Learning: Curriculum, programs and cultural safety awareness

Gikendaasowin is the term used by Anishinaabe peoples to encompass their knowledge and ways of understanding from their origins to their ways of life. This includes history, oral traditions, legal traditions, technological knowledge and science.

In educational settings, it involves integrating Indigenous content and ways of knowing into curricula and campus training programs. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action provide guidance, recommending the inclusion of topics such as the history of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Indigenous rights, Indigenous law and Indigenous-Crown relations.

As well, skills-based training in cultural safety, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism is highlighted in various calls to action, including 1, 16, 24, 28, 57, 62, and 65.

Sub-Themes:

In advancing Reconciliation, UM will empower students, faculty and staff to learn and understand Indigenous history and ways of knowing through:

- Enhancing curriculum with Indigenous knowledges
- Supporting culturally appropriate training for students, staff and faculty
- Ongoing anti-racism education, awareness and community-building

Initial actions:

- Initiate review of curriculum, programs, training and content for opportunities to integrate Indigenous knowledges.
- Explore approaches to resource initiatives.



4. Indigenize spaces, places and supports

“If decolonization is the removal or undoing of colonial elements, then Indigenization could be seen as the addition or redoing of Indigenous elements. Indigenization moves beyond tokenistic gestures of recognition or inclusion to meaningfully change practices and structures. Power, dominance and control are rebalanced and returned to Indigenous peoples, and Indigenous ways of knowing and doing are perceived, presented, and practiced as equal to western ways of knowing and doing.”⁴

Mino-bimaadiziwin, the Anishinaabe concept of living well, is deeply influenced by the environments in which we exist, including where we learn, teach, work and conduct research. Transforming these spaces on our campus to include Indigenous ways of being is crucial for the well-being of Indigenous students, faculty and staff, nurturing their body, mind, heart and spirit.

Creating environments that facilitate **inaadiziwin**, or the realization of one's highest potential as a balanced individual, is essential. This involves inspiring excellence and creativity within a harmonious relationship with all of creation. It encompasses both interior and exterior spaces that support learning, living and ceremony.

Key aspects include incorporating Indigenous art and cultural design, establishing safe spaces and fostering living environments that promote healthier work-life balances that benefits both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, faculty and staff.

Sub-Themes:

In advancing Reconciliation, UM will be a leader in Indigenizing the campus through:

- **Creating spaces and places for mino-bimaadiziwin**
- **Exploring culturally appropriate housing and support**

Initial actions:

- Engage with Indigenous faculty, students, staff and Indigenous communities to listen and learn how to create Indigenous community spaces.
- Support the use of Indigenous languages or Indigenous Peoples/Leaders to name spaces.

⁴ <https://www.queensu.ca/ctl/resources/decolonizing-and-indigenizing/what-decolonization-what-indigenization>



Next steps

The completion of this framework marks the beginning of a forward-looking approach and renewed commitment to Reconciliation at UM. It aims to provide direction for UM's Reconciliation efforts, guiding future advancements, including the development of an implementation plan and progress evaluation.

The framework itself represents a significant milestone in our broader commitment to fostering a new relationship with UM's Indigenous community, as well as the broader Indigenous community. It builds upon past achievements while signaling renewed direction. This part of the journey will take time and great preparation to our systems to action change and commit to continuous improvement.

Over the coming months, we will focus on executing the initial actions outlined in the framework to establish a supportive foundation for our UM community.

While the initial actions progress, our next step will be to develop an implementation plan that focuses on converting this framework into actionable steps that align with the framework commitments. This will be led by discussions with UM's internal and external community members, including Elders, Knowledge Keepers, students, faculty, staff and UM partners, who will play a crucial role. The implementation plan will identify and build on the ideas and actions generated as part of the initial engagement activities, ongoing initiatives, and current reports. Specific goals will be set and a timeline for achieving these goals will be developed. The implementation plan will deliver a comprehensive action plan informed by productive, collaborative and constructive feedback from engagement sessions.

Evaluation becomes central as we compare our actions with initial commitments. Evaluating our progress underscores our dedication to forging positive relationships with Indigenous Peoples and demonstrates our commitment to accountability and continuous improvement.

As we continue to advance Indigenous engagement, excellence and equity throughout all aspects of UM, the decades of preceding work by the many First Nation, Inuit and Métis individuals who have gotten us to this place in time are gratefully acknowledged.

Now is the time for our university and for each of us as individuals to deeply question our attitudes and beliefs when it comes to Reconciliation to ensure Indigenous perspectives are valued and included at UM. Reconciliation requires the work of all of us to create an equitable and safe space for all Indigenous Peoples at UM and in the community. It is time for action. Together, we can create momentum and we can lead change together.



Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the Elders, Knowledge Keepers, faculty, staff, students and community members who participated in consultations and provided feedback on the framework throughout its development. We look forward to future engagement as we move forward in a better way.

Thank you to the Reconciliation Advisory Committee, which reviewed the feedback from the community and provided thoughtful insight to structure the Truth and Reconciliation Framework that will collectively move us to action.

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