



**OFFICE OF THE
VICE-PRESIDENT
(INDIGENOUS)**

Advancing Indigenous Excellence

OUR 2025-26 IMPACT

BY THE NUMBERS

488 Indigenous UM graduates (2024-25)

3,292 self-declared Indigenous students enrolled

10.7% increased enrolment from 2025

Engaged with **7,300+** prospective Indigenous students

Supported **473** Indigenous high school students across 13 Post-Secondary Clubs

3,500+ visits and interactions at the Indigenous Student Centre

46 students completed Indigenous leadership programs

OVPI hosted and partnered on 18 events, engaging more than **4,000+** participants

Territorial Acknowledgment

The University of Manitoba (UM) campuses and research spaces are located on original lands of Anishinaabeg, Ininiwak, Anisininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Dene and Inuit, and on the National Homeland of the Red River Métis.

UM recognizes that the Treaties signed on these lands are a lifelong, enduring relationship, and we are dedicated to upholding their spirit and intent. We acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past and the present.

With this understanding, we commit to supporting Indigenous excellence through active Reconciliation, meaningful change, and the creation of an environment where everyone can thrive.

Our collaboration with Indigenous communities is grounded in respect and reciprocity and this guides how we move forward as an institution.

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Message from the Vice-President (Indigenous)



*Dr. Angie Bruce
Vice-President
(Indigenous)*

This past year, I have been reminded again and again that our work must be grounded in the recognition and advancement of Indigenous excellence – in how we think, act and lead at UM. Through the work of the Office of the Vice-President (Indigenous) (OVPI), we support a university-wide approach that centres relationships, celebrates Indigenous strengths, addresses anti-Indigenous racism and creates space for Indigenous knowledges and ways of being to guide our path forward. Reconciliation is key to this work, shaping how we foster understanding and accountability across the institution.

The ongoing implementation of [UM's Truth and Reconciliation Framework: Time for Action](#) (Framework) has helped establish a shared direction. The Framework calls on all of us to integrate Indigenous knowledges, foster belonging, empower learners and continue the work of Indigenizing our systems and spaces. In doing so, we create the conditions where Indigenous excellence can thrive. This is not separate from our core work as a university – it is part of our collective responsibility and shared future, particularly as Manitoba's Indigenous youth population continues to be the fastest-growing

demographic in the province and represents the next generation of UM students. As Manitoba's research-intensive university, we also have an important role to play in advancing research and innovation in partnership with Indigenous communities, creating knowledge and solutions that benefit all Manitobans.

This work is closely connected to [MomentUM: Leading Change Together](#), where advancing Indigenous excellence is a core institutional commitment. Over the past year, we have focused on supporting faculties and administrative units as they integrate MomentUM and the Framework into their own planning and decision-making. This work is ongoing and evolving. It requires reflection, openness and a willingness to recognize and build upon Indigenous strengths in new and meaningful ways.

A key priority for me has been meeting with faculties, units and teams across our campuses. These conversations have provided important insight into the progress being made and the challenges that remain. They have also reinforced that supporting Indigenous excellence will look different across the institution, and that success depends on leadership, shared accountability and sustained effort.

I am encouraged by the progress we are seeing. There is a growing sense of shared purpose across our community. Together, we are moving forward in a way that is thoughtful, grounded and focused on meaningful action.

About OVPI

How We Work

Collaboration is at the heart of our approach. We work with faculties and units across UM through four key roles: leading, partnering, supporting and advising.

This recognizes that meaningful, lasting transformation requires shared responsibility. By working together, we help advance Indigenous priorities across the institution while fostering strong relationships and collective accountability.

The OVPI comprises several units that work together to advance our mission. These teams play important and complementary roles in supporting this work.



OVPI Strategic Planning Retreat 2025

Our Team

Research and Academics

Advances Indigenous research excellence and academic initiatives by supporting Indigenous scholars, fostering respectful research partnerships and integrating Indigenous knowledges and methodologies into the university's academic landscape.

Indigenous Students, Community, Cultural Integration and Leadership

Enhances experiences and successes for Indigenous students, staff, faculty and community by providing culturally grounded supports, programs and services that foster belonging, community connection and holistic well-being.

Indigenous Engagement, Communications and Community Partnerships

Leads strategic engagement with Indigenous communities and partners, while overseeing communications and events that amplify Indigenous perspectives, strengthen relationships and support OVPI priorities across the university and beyond.

National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR)

An Indigenous-led centre hosted by UM that operates under a unique shared governance model. NCTR's mandate is to preserve the history and legacy of Canada's residential school system, ensuring that the truths of Survivors are never denied or forgotten.

The Centre is led by an Executive Director, who also currently serves as UM's Associate Vice-President (Reconciliation). Through archival preservation, research, education and public engagement, the NCTR advances truth, Reconciliation and healing while fostering greater awareness and understanding of the lasting impacts of the residential school system across Canada.

Manitoba Collaborative Indigenous Education Blueprint (MCIEB)

Through OVPI, UM plays an active role in the MCIEB and supports key initiatives advancing Indigenous post-secondary education across Manitoba and beyond.

This year, this included the 4th Annual Indigenous Education Gathering, Attausikuuluta – Working All Together, which had 348 registered representatives from government bodies, industry partners, post-secondary institutions, community organizations, First Nations and school divisions. UM also made it possible to undertake the engagement of the 63 Manitoba First Nations, five Métis Nations and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) producing two invaluable resources for the benefit of all MCIEB partners to help inform affirming Indigenous identity strategies for post-secondary institutions, strengthening Indigenous success and sector-wide transformation.

Create a Sense of Belonging

The 2024-25 academic year saw 488 Indigenous students graduate from UM.

UM saw record-breaking Indigenous student enrolment, with **3,292** self-declared First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners for the 2025-26 academic year, a **10.7%** increase from the year before.

These are the results of a robust recruitment strategy, strong student supports and comprehensive student leadership programming.

- The Indigenous recruitment and community relations team engaged **7,300+** prospective Indigenous students, supported **473** students across 13 Post-Secondary Clubs and is preparing to welcome a new school partner next year. Eighteen participants registered for the third Indigenous Summer Transition Camp in July 2026.
- **3,500+** visits and interactions involving students, staff, faculty and community members were facilitated through the Indigenous Student Centre. They provided access to supports ranging from academic advising, meeting with Elders, financial literacy programming and cultural opportunities like Full Moon Ceremony and Fireside Chats.
- Recognizing the increasing financial pressures faced by many students, OVPI launched a Community Cupboard at the Indigenous Student Centre this year to provide accessible food and essential items. The initiative helps address immediate needs, reduce barriers to student success and support the overall well-being of Indigenous students.
- Paskwâmostôš Wâwiyaw (formerly the Indigenous Circle of Empowerment) and Bison Spirit are co-curricular Indigenous leadership programs that support students across UM in developing leadership skills grounded in culture, community and personal growth. This year, 46 students completed these programs. Graduates continue to advance in their studies and careers, build businesses and take on leadership roles within their communities, including one graduate who was elected Chief and another who became the first architect from her Nation. Through their achievements, participants are contributing to stronger Indigenous communities and a more inclusive UM.



Students take part in cultural teachings during Transition Camp

"The camp helped me navigate the city and build bonds. I was able to learn what goals others had in mind when attending university. Mine is to get my Social Work degree."

Kaydence Moar-Grey
Where We First Stand Transition
Camp participant

“The **Bison Spirit** program has been a supportive and empowering space throughout my time at university. Through cultural teachings, mentorship and community-building opportunities, the program has helped me strengthen my confidence and sense of belonging as an Indigenous student.”

Aya Jorgenson, Bison Spirit participant

- In 2025-2026, the UM Indigenous Birding Club hosted 42 walks, workshops and special events, creating nearly 500 participant experiences for Indigenous students, staff, faculty, community members and allies. The award-winning club has become a low-barrier, evidence-based, high-impact initiative that strengthens UM community well-being, builds belonging and creates regular opportunities for connection with the land.

Community Partnerships

Through UM's partnership with the Mastercard Foundation's EleV program, nine UM-based initiatives and multiple community partnerships – including four Learning Hubs located in First Nations throughout Manitoba – supported over 700 Indigenous youth and employed more than 25 Indigenous staff. Together, these internal programs and community initiatives created a continuum of support, from early transition to post-secondary education to employment addressing systemic barriers faced by Indigenous learners.

In September 2025, the Mastercard Foundation recognized UM's leadership in Reconciliation with a \$5 million gift to continue this work.

Elder Ecosystem

As requests for Elder and Knowledge Keeper engagement rise across faculties and units, OVPI is proactively addressing this need through the development of the Elder Ecosystem. This will enhance access to Indigenous knowledge, strengthen relationships and provide a consistent framework for engagement across the university.

We expect to begin implementing the Elder Ecosystem over the next fiscal year.



Students access education in community at the Pine Creek Learning Hub



Karen Courchene, Indigenous Student Centre Grandmother-in-Residence

Sponsorships and Signature Events

This year, OVPI supported 21 sponsored initiatives, allocating \$39,000 to predominantly student-led and community-focused projects. These investments help create opportunities for Indigenous students and community members to connect, celebrate, learn and strengthen their sense of belonging, while advancing Indigenous excellence and engagement across the university.

OVPI hosted and partnered on 18 events, engaging more than 4,000 participants in opportunities that advanced Indigenous student success, fostered cultural learning, strengthened community partnerships and celebrated Indigenous excellence.

Our signature events include:

New Buffalo Education Gathering

The New Buffalo Education Gathering welcomed 382 Indigenous high school students to the Fort Garry campus. For many participants, it is their first experience at UM. Through program information sessions, residence and campus tours, and discussions focused on student supports, safety and well-being, the gathering helped prospective students envision themselves as future UM learners.

Elders and Traditional Peoples Gathering

The Elders and Traditional Peoples Gathering (Gathering) welcomed 750 participants to the Fort Garry campus from across the UM and the broader community, making it one of the university's largest Indigenous engagement events. Through teachings, storytelling, ceremony and cultural practices shared by Elders and Knowledge Keepers, participants engaged with Indigenous knowledge systems, pedagogies and epistemologies that emphasize relationality, reciprocity and wholistic ways of knowing. The Gathering fostered deeper understanding of Indigenous intellectual traditions while supporting spiritual, emotional, mental and physical well-being, advancing learning and dialogue that strengthens Indigenous scholarship, education and community connection.

Annual Traditional Graduation Pow Wow

Approximately 120 Indigenous graduates participated in the Annual Traditional Graduation Pow Wow, in front of nearly 1,000 community members, making it one of UM's most well-attended Pow Wows ever.

The event recognizes academic achievement through ceremony, culture and community, bringing together graduates, families, Elders, UM community members and supporters to honour this important milestone.



Annual Traditional Graduation Pow Wow 2025

Honouring the Indigenous Campus Community

The 2025 Honouring the Indigenous Campus Community blanketing ceremony celebrated 10 outstanding members of the UM community who are advancing Indigenous knowledges, championing social justice and strengthening communities on and beyond campus.



2025 honourees: Aimée-Mihkokwaniy McGillis, Faculty of Arts; Pahan PteSanWin, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies; Antonina Kandiurin, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences; Michaela de Hoop, Faculty of Science; Jory Thomas, Faculty of Architecture; Desiree Morrisseau-Keesick, Indigenous Student Recruitment; Kirsty Muller, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences; Rhonda Campbell, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences; Sunday Qeskekapow, Faculty of Arts; Justin Rasmussen, Indigenous Leadership Programming



Integrate Indigenous Knowledges and Ways of Being

Truth and Reconciliation Framework: Time for Action

Last year, UM launched the [*Truth and Reconciliation Framework: Time for Action*](#) (Framework) at a community event in March 2025. The Framework acts as a foundational guide for academic and administrative units to develop their own Reconciliation action plans.

This year, OVPI leadership met with 17 faculties and departments to discuss opportunities to work collaboratively to meet UM's Reconciliation commitments as defined in the Framework. As a result, outreach to OVPI from Deans and Department Heads has increased. For example, the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences sought OVPI's guidance in hiring a Truth and Reconciliation coordinator. OVPI provided expertise on the job description, participated on the search committee and helped connect the successful candidate with peers across campus, strengthening collaboration and shared learning among Reconciliation-focused roles.

Affirming Indigenous Citizenship Policy

Work on the draft Affirming Indigenous Citizenship Policy continued to advance, focusing on refining the policy framework, engaging UM partners to develop business requirements and reaching out to communities. This extensive community engagement informed a preliminary draft and directly shaped our policy and procedure document, outlining community-specific documentation expectations. Continued refinement of the policy is underway, with approval sought from Senate and Board of Governors in October, 2026.

Respectful Rematriation and Repatriation Ceremony (RRRC) Policy

UM has been recognized from a legal perspective as well as by institutional peers for our leadership in the development and implementation of the RRRC, which involves returning Indigenous Ancestors and Belongings that were taken and/or held by the university without consent to First Nations, Inuit and Métis descendant communities.

Returns/reburials began in the summer of 2024 and continue. All Nations who have Ancestors housed at UM have been contacted and have either been reburied or are in various planning stages for reburials. Additionally, a group of Elders from across Manitoba has come together to guide the reburials of "Our Shared Ancestors," Ancestors that cannot be affiliated with one community or Nation.

Land-based framework progress

UM aspires to be a leader in land-based education by integrating Indigenous ways of knowing across teaching, research and community engagement. Guided by Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community partners, this work emphasizes learning through relationships with the land and fostering meaningful connections to place. The framework is expected to be released in the upcoming academic year and will provide an institution-wide roadmap for implementing land-based education in a meaningful and consistent way.

Indigenous research ethics

UM seeks to be a place where Indigenous ways of knowing are valued. However, scholars who conduct research by, for and with Indigenous Peoples have raised concerns about how their work is reviewed by Research Ethics Boards (REBs). These concerns do not reject ethical oversight itself but rather question how Western, institution-centered ethics systems account for Indigenous relational ethics, collective responsibility, oral knowledge systems and land-based methodologies. Currently underway is the development of an Indigenous Research Ethics report outlining an action plan to embed relational care within REB operations, align ethics review processes with community governance and Indigenous data sovereignty, and introduce Indigenous-led ethics pathways.

“The Oskâpêwis Training Program (Scaabe School) is a true source of light in my life. It provides the opportunity to grow within oneself, learn alongside others, and honour land-based and ancestral teachings”

Keira Rondeau-Opanubi
Oskâpêwis Training Program
participant



Elders & Traditional Peoples Gathering 2026

Empower Learning

In advancing Reconciliation, UM will empower students, faculty and staff to learn and understand Indigenous history and ways of understanding and knowing. This year, OVPI's highlights in this area include:

- The Indigenous Scholars Speaker Series hosted three events, including a dynamic panel discussion regarding the Current Developments Concerning the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples & the Law.
- The Researching in Good Ways (RIGW) team gathered stories and insights from faculty, graduate students and Indigenous community members to shape the principles that will become the framework for engaging in research partnerships with Indigenous communities. The framework is being finalized for release in fall 2026, helping address a significant gap in the sector and positioning UM as a national leader in Indigenous research partnerships.
- Work is underway on an Indigenous Course Requirement recommendations report to guide the development of a university-wide strategy that ensures all students have access to Indigenous-focused learning through their academic programs or institutional course offerings.
- In response to institutional requests, OVPI convened Indigenous scholars from across the university to inform the development of wise practices for tenure and promotion guidelines related to research with, for and by Indigenous Peoples. Drawing on environmental scans and collective expertise, the group is helping advance approaches that better recognize and assess Indigenous scholarship.
- The NCTR saw expanded education reach: over 1,400 new educators registered classrooms, 30,000 views of Truth and Reconciliation Week lunch-and-learns, and more than 3,000 youth attending a national gathering in Halifax.



Researching in Good Ways engagement



Reconciliation Heart Garden 2025



Places and Spaces



Elders at the MCIEB 2025 Gathering

The OVPI secured \$80,000 in strategic initiatives funding to advance two major projects: building an Indigenous student ecosystem and developing an Indigenous mental health strategy.

As identified in the *Truth and Reconciliation Framework: Time for Action*, and in partnership with the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre, work is well underway on the development of an Indigenous mental health strategy; this year more than 100 UM students, staff, faculty and community members contributed to engagement activities that will influence the development of the Indigenous mental health strategy.

With the increase in Indigenous applications and enrolment, the changing demographic and student needs, and the diversity of Indigenous student support services across campus, an internal working group is examining how to implement changes to help more Indigenous students find the supports they want more easily – referred to as the Indigenous student ecosystem.

OVPI continues to strengthen Indigenous cultural knowledge across UM, supporting activities such as Territory Acknowledgement workshops, Sweat Lodge preparation sessions, and Learning and Sharing Circles. These were offered to UM staff, students and faculty, and the broader community.

There is a growing network of Elders-in-Residence and over 15 Sweat Lodge ceremonies annually. This year, there were over 325 attendees at sweat lodge ceremonies.



Tipi at Migizii Agamik – Bald Eagle Lodge

Looking Forward

As we look forward together, we see tremendous opportunity. The Office of the Vice-President (Indigenous) will continue to work alongside faculties, units, students, communities and partners to advance Indigenous excellence across every part of UM. Through supporting Indigenous student success, strengthening community relationships and creating pathways for Manitoba's fastest-growing population of young people to access post-secondary education, we are helping build the future of our university and our province.

This work benefits every faculty, every discipline and every member of the UM community. By advancing the commitments of *Truth and Reconciliation Framework: Time for Action* and *MomentUM: Leading Change Together*, we are creating a stronger institution where Indigenous knowledges, perspectives and leadership enrich teaching, research, innovation and service.

The path forward is one we share. Together, we are advancing Reconciliation, creating new opportunities for learners and communities and strengthening UM's reputation as a leader in Indigenous excellence. Through collaboration, respect and a commitment to meaningful action, we are contributing to the well-being, prosperity and innovation of our local, national and global communities for generations to come.

“Paskwâmostôs Wâwiyaw has significantly increased my confidence in all aspects of my life. It has allowed me to strengthen both my personal identity and my Indigenous identity, and now I have a greater understanding of my purpose in life.”

Paskwâmostôs Wâwiyaw – Indigenous Leadership
Program participant



UM Staff cheer on students



Students studying on campus



University
of Manitoba

umanitoba.ca/Indigenous