



ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan

REPORT



The land is acknowledged as our Mother, the Earth. The University of Saskatchewan is committed to honor and support the *Indigenous peoples, Indigenous cultures, Indigenous values, and Indigenous languages that belong to the land of Treaty 6 Territory and Homeland of the Métis. The University of Saskatchewan is committed to working towards mending colonized lands and protecting the land in a way that demonstrates honour, respect, and love. The University of Saskatchewan extends this commitment to the lands and Treaty territories (Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10) that constitute kisiskâciwan ([Saskatchewan], “the swift current”, Cree/Saulteaux), and all Indigenous people that call kisiskâciwan home. We are born to the land and the land claims us.



Tipi

The Tipi is a dwelling for First Nations people. Being nomadic people and always on the move, the Tipi was designed for easy transport. Secure, mobile and providing shelter, the Tipi symbolizes the Good Mother sheltering and protecting her children.

Table of Contents

4	A letter from the Vice–Provost
5	ohpahotân oohpaahotaan: The story behind the name
7	Implementation: UPlan 2025
8	Expectations of Implementation - Phase One: Education
8	Phase Two: Understanding and consultation
9	Phase Three: Reporting back to OVPIE
10	Phase Four: Accountabilities and success stories
12	Telling our story
13	The oyateki Partnership
14	Building Intercultural Resilience Mentorship (BIRM) Program
15	Smudging and Ceremonies Policy
16	Upcoming initiatives
17	Website refresh
18	Systemic change influenced by the gift
19	Truth Telling Report
20	ohpahotân oohpaahotaan symposiums





Hide With Willow Hoop

First Nations believe that their values and traditions are gifts from the Creator, including the Land, Plants and Animals.

Hides are believed to be offered by the animal as the Creator wishes and, therefore, as the animal dies the hunter thanks the animal for its offering.

Office of the Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement

The Office of the Vice Provost, Indigenous Engagement was created in 2017 tasked with leading, creating and implementing strategic and systemic change within the institution toward Indigenization and transformative decolonization leading to reconciliation. The office was established to support and build beyond the existing work completed to improve and support the success and experience of Indigenous students, staff, and faculty. The Office of the Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement uplifts relationships across campus and external with Indigenous communities and allies. Relationships with Métis, First Nations, and Inuit communities strengthen institutional priorities; these relationships are vital to the implementation and consultation of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan through four collaborative phases.





Inukshuk

An extension of an Inuk (a human being), the Inukshuk are left as messages fixed in time and space. They may represent personal notes or a grief marking where a loved one perished. They act as markers to indicate people who knew how to survive on the land living in a traditional way.

A Letter from the Vice-Provost

On August 20, 2022, a warm summer day, the University of Saskatchewan was gifted ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan: The Indigenous strategy, “let’s fly up together”. The ceremony and intention of the gift has set USask on a path toward realizing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reports’ 10 principles of reconciliation, 94 Calls to Action and the 46 articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). These foundational documents were consistent guides in the creation of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. The relationship between the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report and the Indigenous Strategy of the University of Saskatchewan is woven together and inseparable. When we realize the Indigenous Strategy for the university and have embedded its commitments, guideposts, and markers into the fabric of our policies, processes, and behaviors we will have established a path towards the reality of Indigenization leading to transformative decolonization.

This report is meant to give our campus community an account of the past leading to the gifting of the Indigenous Strategy, a snapshot of our present status towards realizing the Indigenous strategy and a glimpse at what our future will be once we have embedded ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan throughout USask. This work is not easy, and demands our attention, respect, and love. Without working together to support this work and to walk this path hand in hand, the

journey will be impossible. Each of the phases toward implementation and reporting were established with the intention that uplifting ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan is the responsibility of every member of the USask community, focusing in on the sentiment of the name “Let’s Fly Up Together”. The office of the Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement is charged with ensuring the University of Saskatchewan community acknowledges, cares for and supports the success of our Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and administrators...What’s good for Indigenous folks, is good for all.

I want to thank the Wise Ones Circle for their guidance on this journey. Our Knowledge Keepers, Knowledge Holders and Elders are central to the work being done with ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. Without their guidance, care and love we would be unable to move this work forward toward ensuring safe and accountable space for Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and administrators. Indigenization leading to transformative decolonization at the University of Saskatchewan is a reality when we “awaken understanding, build relationships and inspire collaborative and respectful action driven by the spirit and intent” of which ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan was gifted to the university (pg. 6).

Together in solidarity,

Dr. Angela M. Jaime (Pit River)
Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement





Rainbow

The Rainbow is a sign of the great mystery, the Creator's grace reminding all to respect, love and live in harmony. Rainbow colours are seen as stages in life and they follow individual belief systems of various First Nations.

ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan

THE STORY BEHIND THE NAME

“The name of the University of Saskatchewan Indigenous Strategy is ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. This name symbolizes growth, journey and relational teachings that guide and strengthen our lives and work. ohpahotân was drawn from ohpahowipîsim (flying up moon). During this moon, after a time of being nurtured in a nest and experiencing the world from the ground, a new generation of birds take flight. There is so much symbolism to the flying up moon for our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students – and for all people. This moon can be representative of a rite of passage. In taking flight, there is the experience of pushing past a boundary into a whole new world – a whole new perspective. In taking flight for the first time, the once baby winged ones, see creation in a new way, and once this step is taken, they can never unsee this new space. Everything has just gotten more expansive, richer in colour and scope. There are new freedoms and opportunities to become more self-determined. Through ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan, the Indigenous Strategy, the University of Saskatchewan can continue to break boundaries and push past barriers that inhibit real and long-lasting respectful relationships, ones that inspire authentic collaborations that lead to systemwide transformational change. ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan requires courage because its essence is dynamic discomfort that is required for revolutionary growth.’

The Office of the Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement (OVPIE) promotes, collaborates, and consults with colleges and units across USask campuses. As advocates for positive and systemic change in the experience of Indigenous students prior, during and after the completion of their studies at USask. OVPIE strives to be stewards of this strategy and work toward making the University of Saskatchewan a place which lives by each of the seven commitments and their calls to action and markers. This report is a snapshot into the world of the OVPIE and the work currently underway.

The implementation phases in ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan are intended to provide a scaffolding of learning to educate and support changing landscape of the university as it progresses toward Indigenization and decolonization. The 4 phases in the implementation of the strategy will allow for the required dialogue and education needed for sustainable implementation toward change.





Eagle Feather

The Eagle Feather is a symbol of truth, power and freedom. The dark and light colours represent balance. It is a very high honour to receive an Eagle Feather, and usually marks a milestone. When one holds the Eagle Feather, one must speak the truth in a positive way, showing respect at all times.

Implementation

- **Phase 1:** helping the campus community to understand the vision Elders and Knowledge Keepers had when writing and gifting the strategy,
- **Phase 2:** working with units on campus toward common goals and ensuring alignment with the strategy,
- **Phase 3:** turning ideas and plans into reality and pushing forward for lasting change, and
- **Phase 4:** sharing stories of success, assessing progress, and creating change that is sustainable and effective for each person, unit, or college.



The improvement of the Indigenous student experience must be at the forefront of all discussions to truly live our *Mission, Vision, and Values* at USask. Each of the projects engaged by OVPIE is outlined by connecting specifically to the commitments of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. This is meant to not only tell a story but lead by example when uplifting this engaged work.

UPlan 2025

The implementation of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) aligns with the University Plan 2025 (UPlan 2025), weaving First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledges into the campus culture. The commitments embedded into the UPlan 2025 include: Courageous Curiosity empowers us to uplift Indigenization to a place of prominence and foster decolonization, Boundless Collaboration fosters reconciliation and healing, and Inspiring Communities promotes respect and reciprocity with Indigenous communities. ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan, the Indigenous Strategy, is integrated throughout campus, enhancing the principles of nîkânîtân manâchitowinihk ni manachihitooaan, *Let us lead with respect*. This approach ensures the voices of Indigenous Peoples at USask are central to all planning and priorities. Each unit’s vision contributes to Indigenization and decolonization, focusing on the seven commitments: Safety, Wellness, Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation, and Renewal.



Métis Sash

The Métis Sash is a symbol of present-day Métis identity but had many uses in the early days, often functioning as a rope or a belt. The Infinity sign (∞) on the Sash symbolizes two cultures together and the continuity of the Métis culture. The Sash uses traditional woven patterns and colours to represent individual Métis communities.

EXPECTATIONS OF IMPLEMENTATION

PHASE ONE: EDUCATION

The Office of the Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement (OVPIE) is responsible for the oversight of uplifting ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. Over the past two and a half years of implementation OVPIE has presented ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan to over sixty units across campus and externally. This presentation is the first phase of four in the implementation plan for ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. Phase one is meant to expose the audience to the Indigenous Strategy and generate dialogue within the unit. The goal is to develop a clear understanding of what it means for ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan to be realized within the specific context of the unit. After the initial phase, consultation with OVPIE is sought for further guidance in phase two. A well-resourced working group or committee within the unit, school or college is formed to focus specifically on this work as a strategic priority.

PHASE TWO: UNDERSTANDING AND CONSULTATION

Phase two is designed for the unit to work directly with the Office of the Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement to return to offer an opportunity for the unit to ask questions, discuss possible collaboration, and work towards understanding the intentions of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. All strategic priorities and activities resulting from and inspired by the dialogue regarding the Indigenous Strategy are compiled. This phase is built to encourage consultation with OVPIE to build stronger relationships and plan for the unit, school or college working toward phase three.

MEETING WITH SENIOR LEADERS

Dr. Angela Jaime, Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement has met with all college deans and school executive directors to discuss the progress of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan implementation for their college or school. These meetings have provided insight on challenges, success stories and suggestions for engagement. These meetings will repeat January 2025 as a follow up to phases three and four.





Buffalo

The Buffalo symbolizes subsistence, strength and the ability to survive. The Buffalo is a spiritual animal as it provides so many things, including food, clothing, shelter and tools.

PHASE THREE: PRESENTING THE PLAN

During the third phase, it is anticipated that all consultations with OVPIE and the plans for past, present, and future implementations of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan will come to fruition and be ready for a comprehensive presentation. This presentation will include:

- a reflection on the projects already in place and their evolution.
- models of how Indigenization and decolonization are engrained in the strategic priorities of the unit.
- goals for systemic change and actionable items.
- plans for data collection and analysis for systemic change
- require each unit to be prepared for constructive feedback aligned with the commitments of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan.
- demonstrate how the work of implementing ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan will be actively involved in day-to-day planning and operation.

Phase three creates accountability to ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan and demonstrates how it facilitates systemic change within the unit, school, or college. Once phase 3 is complete, the unit, then proceeds toward phase four, implementation of their plan.





Drum

Traditionally given to men for ceremony and prayer, the Drum is the heartbeat of the Earth, and feeds our spirit. The Drum has the spirit of the deer and the tree that were offered as a gift from the Creator for the Drum, and it guides people home.

PHASE FOUR: ACCOUNTABILITIES AND SUCCESS STORIES

Lastly, in Phase 4, the unit, school, or college implements, evaluates, and assesses its progress through actions, behavior change and key performance indicators of success. This includes reporting out the progress made through implementation and how it will be sustained into the future. This phase exemplifies the goals not only of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan, but also of the UPlan 2025. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- We will illustrate success through the increase of Indigenous student retentions and graduation rates.
- Success will be gauged through the recruitment, retention and promotion of Indigenous staff and faculty thriving in safe and accountable space.
- Anti-racism and anti-oppression training and accountabilities for all members of the university community (students, staff, faculty, administrators).
- Indigenous space is created, maintained, and protected for Indigenous people.
- All seven of the commitments of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan are implemented by weaving them into the policies, procedures and academic mission of the university.
- Indigenous initiatives are elevated across the campus and foster a collaborative environment aimed at the collective success of Indigenous students, staff and faculty.

Reaching this stage necessitates a comprehensive transformation in the thought process involved in planning every facet of work conducted on campus. While not all units, schools or colleges are identical, the commitments to ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan are consistently upheld.

Key Performance Indicators, which are then assessed through by qualitative and quantitative data evidencing the establishment of systemic change. Ultimately, the KPIs are influenced by the establishment of an environment free of racism, discrimination, and harmful working conditions. The intent of implementing ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan is to create a safe, accountable, equitable, anti-racist and anti-oppressive space to study, work, and research for all.

Initiatives are reported out by sharing stories, data collection, and consultations. The narratives of success and challenges will be reported back to OVPIE to be compiled and reported to the university community.





Medicine Wheel

The Medicine Wheel contains four quadrants of life each representing a certain aspect of holistic make-up: intellectual, spiritual, physical and emotional self. The four colours represent the four directions: red, yellow, white and blue (or black, green or darker colours depending on the Indigenous group). Four is a very significant number in Indigenous cultures.

PHASE 1

In phase one, the strategy will be presented to each unit. The presentation will focus on sharing the gift and helping the unit to understand the intricacies of the strategy. This phase will be about the unit learning all they can about the strategy, how they can implement the framework, and ways to improve upon the initiatives they have already been delivering.

PHASE 2

Phase two is the brainstorming and dialogue phase. This will require collaboration between the Office of the Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement and each unit to develop strategic ways forward ensuring the effective and respectful use of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. It is the intention of the OVPIE to support the unit in its journey toward implementation of the gift.

PHASE 3

Phase three the unit will prepare a presentation and meeting with OVPIE to demonstrate their commitment and plan to implement the strategy. These presentations are meant to further the discussion toward implementing and promoting the strategy through student support services, curriculum, academic success, retention and recruitment of Indigenous staff and faculty, research with and by Indigenous People, etc.

PHASE 4

Phase four will be the opportunity to share and model stewardship of the gift. Consultations and data collection will present a picture to share success stories, the creation of future initiatives, and demonstrate positive systemic impact on the experience of Indigenous students, staff, and faculty. During this process, the goal is to identify key performance indicators demonstrating the adoption of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. This phase will guide the University of Saskatchewan toward reconciliation leading to transformative decolonization.





Turtle

Symbolizing Mother Earth, the Turtle is depicted with 13 inner markings, each representing a cycle of the Earth around the sun. There are 28 smaller outer markings of the shell representing the days of each cycle.

Telling Our Story

Over the past seven years the Office of the Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement has worked to listen, consult, support, and ignite systemic change at the University of Saskatchewan to improve the experience and pathways toward success of Indigenous students, staff, and faculty. Examples of this work is provided as ways of demonstrating nīkānītān manācihitowinihk ni manachihitoonaan, *Let us lead with respect.*

deybwewin | taapwaywin | tapwewin

Indigenous citizenship/membership verification with documentation

The University of Saskatchewan’s deybwewin | taapwaywin | tapwewin policy provides a framework for the implementation of Indigenous membership/citizenship verification with documentation. The University of Saskatchewan is committed to safeguarding the cultures and integrity of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous values, and Indigenous languages within the university. By using the seven commitments of ohpahotān | oohpaahotaan: USask’s Indigenous Strategy, the truth policy centers the voices of Indigenous governments and people to seek truth to hold Indigenous specific space.

The policy promotes safety by protecting, creating, and demanding Indigenous spaces be secured for Indigenous people. The processes and protection of these spaces foster wellness, with data held securely to ensure that submitted documentation is reviewed only by Indigenous

people. The policy, created through protocol based on honouring sovereign and inherent rights and using Indigenous languages, demonstrates stewardship. From its creation to implementation, the policy is centered around representation, protecting Indigenous peoples at USask. The creation of the policy was lead by an Indigenous taskforce, comprised of representative from Indigenous governments, community members, Elders and Knowledge Keepers. Developing this taskforce exemplifies the commitment to creating right relations with Indigenous peoples. USask continues to be an innovative leader in the area of Truth and Reconciliation by creating this unique and first-of-its-kind policy, showcasing creation. Renewal is exemplified by moving Forward toward data sovereignty, protecting, and promoting spaces for Indigenous students, staff, and faculty at USask.





Red River Cart

The primary means of travel and transportation of goods for Métis people, the Red River cart has become synonymous with the Métis

The oyateki Partnership



The oyateki Partnership, funded by the Mastercard Foundation, intuitively enacts the commitments of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan as the intention of the partnership is systems change for Indigenous youth. Initiatives through the partnership create and protect space for Indigenous students at USask reflective of the student life cycle from admissions to career. Programming such as Beading with Auntie offer a holistic, culturally inclusive therapy approach. The oyateki kahkisiw framework supports an Indigenous Wellness Counselor who uses traditional Indigenous approaches in programming, wellness, and therapy to foster self-determination, this initiative upholds the commitment of wellness. The Indigenous Student Internship Program offers mentorship experiences from the post-secondary experience to meaningful careers, offering space for mentorship; creates a space committed to Safety. This inclusive approach to programming welcomes and honours the nuances of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being.

The oyateki Partnership is a cross-institutional collaboration between Gabriel Dumont Institute, Saskatchewan Indian

Institute for Technologies and USask and effectively represents many Indigenous languages, cultures, and teachings. Programming by oyateki uplifts Indigenous Ways of Knowing, creating space for cross-institutional and cross-unit collaboration. When upholding Stewardship, oyateki has developed a yoga program based on the Seven Grandfather Teachings. The intent of the oyateki Partnership inherently uplifts Indigenous people; for USask this begins with all positions under oyateki being held by Indigenous professionals. In building this foundation, oyateki professionals can reciprocate this to Indigenous students at USask through their work via admissions, programming, and unique initiatives.

Representation is a key factor of success for Indigenous students and by having an oyateki Student Advisor help to guide students successfully through university systems effectively increasing self-efficacy, sense of connectedness, and understandings of academic life. The unique approach of having the oyateki team members housed in various units across campus invites relationship building and reciprocity. The intent of Stewardship is

extended to engagement and support of Indigenous students through all initiatives. The partnership funded by the Mastercard Foundation invests resources to promote creation of innovative ways to promote systems change at USask. This is demonstrated through many initiatives including a Community of Practice which upholds and encourages wise practices and system changes for Indigenous applicants.

The Building Intercultural Resilience Mentorship (BIRM) program, kahkisiw wrap around supports, and support through the College of Graduate and Post-doctoral Studies strengthens supports and systems navigation for Indigenous youth to recognize their strengths and find success at USask. The learnings and growth of students while at USask become intergenerational strength for self-determination. All aspects of the partnership walk with individuals throughout the student cycle from high school to a career beyond USask. By capturing narratives and experiences of students it will contribute to the value of this partnership and lead toward continues renewal of USask and working with and for Indigenous students, staff and faculty.





Star/Star Blanket

The star symbol on Star Blankets ends with eight outer points to represent one’s travels from grandmother, to daughter/son and then to grandchild and to Mother Earth. Eight diamond quilted shapes form the centre and pieces are added to each row to increase the size of the star pattern. Star Blankets are given to individuals at times of life changing events such as births, deaths, graduations and marriages. To give a Star Blanket is to show utmost respect, honour and admiration.



Building Intercultural Resilience Mentorship (BIRM) Program:

The Building Intercultural Resilience Mentorship (BIRM) Program embodies the seven commitments of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan in the development and implementation of mentorship for Indigenous high school students to pursue post-secondary education. BIRM emphasizes Safety by fostering an environment where students can express their identities freely. It promotes Wellness by teaching students to balance their personal medicine wheel and providing strategies for improvement. Stewardship is practiced by preserving language and culture through relationships with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and language teachers. The BIRM is fully developed and implemented by Indigenous staff who amplify the voices of Indigenous student volunteers and is a testament to Creation and Representation. Right Relations are maintained through collaborations within the oyateki Partnership and connections to Indigenous initiatives in the Indigenous community and on campus. Lastly, the program serves as a Renewal initiative, expanding the horizons of Indigenous students to pursue post-secondary education and achieve their goals.





Tipi

The Tipi is a dwelling for First Nations people. Being nomadic people and always on the move, the Tipi was designed for easy transport. Secure, mobile and providing shelter, the Tipi symbolizes the Good Mother sheltering and protecting her children.

Smudging and Ceremonies Policy

This policy is the first in the U15 to make all USask campuses and spaces a smudge and ceremony safe space. This means Indigenous ceremonies and smudging can occur in any space on campus without any formal approval.

The Smudging and Ceremonies Policy at USask reinforces its commitments by creating safe spaces for Indigenous learners, researchers, and employees. This policy shifts the narrative to an inclusion focused change rather than a safety focused barrier for Indigenous Peoples. This exemplifies the commitments to creating space, rather than accommodating space. It is a positive and monumental change which reflects the willingness for all involved at USask to learn and uphold the gift of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. As we move boldly toward a better future on this USask campus and create a place that is inclusive of ceremonial practices and the practice of burning medicine. The policy aligns with the strategic commitment of Indigenization by embracing manachihitowin (respect

one another). With the policy being an Indigenous led and Indigenous informed process. With the on-going support of three senior leadership units including the Office of the Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement, the Associate Vice-President Services, and the Associate Vice-President People the implementation of this policy is a collaborative effort ensuring all are safe, supported and welcomed. Honouring the gift of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan, we outline how this policy was developed through the strategies commitments. By protecting space to practice ceremony and smudging, this directly relates to the overall promotion of safety at USask. It promotes wellness by safeguarding spiritual and ceremonial practices on campus where Indigenous peoples study,

work, and conduct research. Under the commitment of stewardship, the policy upholds high standards in welcoming and protecting the practice of smudging and Indigenous ceremonial practices. It encourages right Relations by fostering collaborative work across the campus to uplift Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being. The policy also emphasizes Representation focusing on the inclusion of Indigenous ceremonies, creation by creating a welcoming space for ceremonies and the practice of smudging daily, not confined to designated areas. Lastly, the policy signifies Renewal showing USask’s commitment to fostering an environment that respects and celebrates the rich cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples.





Hide With Willow Hoop

First Nations believe that their values and traditions are gifts from the Creator, including the Land, Plants and Animals. Hides are believed to be offered by the animal as the Creator wishes and, therefore, as the animal dies the hunter thanks the animal for its offering.

Upcoming Initiatives:

The Spring STEM and Girls Workshop and the USask Indigenous Summer Institute:

The University of Saskatchewan is committed to facilitating Indigenous youth summer opportunities that are Indigenous created, led, and staffed. These initiatives prioritize safety, creating a safe space for Indigenous Youth to explore the university and envision themselves in an academic space.

The institutes also promote Wellness by fostering a sense of belonging among new Indigenous students and increasing the number of Indigenous mentors on

campus. Stewardship is upheld by integrating Indigenous teachings and cultural activities into all youth summer programming.

The programs aim to enhance Representation by increasing the number of physical spaces that recognize Indigenous peoples, cultures, and practices. Each of these opportunities strive to attract, increase, and retain Indigenous students and leaders across the university. In terms of right Relations, both programs continue to create partnerships and relationships with First Nation and Métis communities to recruit Indigenous youth. The creation of the program is

Indigenous led and informed, with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and other Indigenous created programs consulted to ensure best practices. Lastly, the facilitation of Indigenous youth summer institutes signifies Renewal. They create an environment for Indigenous youth to learn while connecting with cultural knowledges through land- and place-based learning as well as interactions with Elders and Knowledge Keepers. These initiatives are examples of USask’s commitment to fostering an environment that respects and celebrates the rich cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples.





Inukshuk

An extension of an Inuk (a human being), the Inukshuk are left as messages fixed in time and space. They may represent personal notes or a grief marking where a loved one perished. They act as markers to indicate people who knew how to survive on the land living in a traditional way.

Website Refresh

The website for ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan has undergone a refresh to ensure useability, ease in navigation, and a clear presentation of the strategy.

Key changes include:

- Modifying the original document to enhance useability for printing and navigation.
- Adopting the deybwewin | taapwaywin | tapwewin land acknowledgement, which was influenced by the guiding principles of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan.
- Segmenting the strategy into highlights of different areas of focus, from the gifting of the strategy to the framework, and the implementation.
- The framework section, which was initially created in conjunction with UPlan 2025, now exists as an interactive feature on the new webpage.

As USask moves through Phases 3 and 4 of ohpahotân oohpaahotaan the website will reflect on-going progress.





Rainbow

The Rainbow is a sign of the great mystery, the Creator's grace reminding all to respect, love and live in harmony. Rainbow colours are seen as stages in life and they follow individual belief systems of various First Nations.

Some examples of ... Systemic change Influenced by the Gift

Systemic change is a key objective of USask strategic planning. Since the introduction of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan, systemic transformations have taken place. These changes were driven by the Indigenous Strategy and directly shaped by the seven commitments: Safety, Wellness, Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation, and Renewal.

Some highlighted examples:

USask Policies and Initiatives:

- ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan
- deybwewin | taapwaywin | tapwewin
- The Oyateki Partnership
- Building Intercultural Resilience Mentorship Program
- Smudging and Ceremonies Policy

Examples of initiatives across USask:

- The hiring of the first Vice-Dean Indigenous, Medicine
- The Good Medicine People Space in the College of Medicine
- Masters of Indigenous Land Based Education
- Department of Indigenous Health and Wellness
- MOU agreement with Métis Nation of Saskatchewan contributing to a Citizenship agreement and the establishment of the Faculty Chair in Métis Governance and Public Policy
- New Faculty Chair, Indigenous Children's Wellness

Upcoming Initiatives

- American Indian Science and Engineering Society Regional Conference
- Science Technology Engineering Mathematics Workshop
- USask Indigenous Summer Institute
- Indigenization at USask - An Anthology





Eagle Feather

The Eagle Feather is a symbol of truth, power and freedom. The dark and light colours represent balance. It is a very high honour to receive an Eagle Feather, and usually marks a milestone. When one holds the Eagle Feather, one must speak the truth in a positive way, showing respect at all times.

Truth Telling Report

On September 2021, the final report, *University of Saskatchewan Senior Leadership Consultations with Indigenous Faculty and Staff (November – December 2020): Truth-telling*, was released. This report, along with the ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan, Indigenous Strategy and the University Plan 2025 nikānitān manāchitowinihk ni manaachihitooaan, support and guide Indigenous engagement at USask. Each document has a unique purpose, are complementary on the path forward to transformative decolonization leading to reconciliation. This consultation with Indigenous faculty and staff was a major step in the learning journey underway at USask. The university community is committed to taking needed action toward acknowledgement and incorporation of Indigenous concepts, methodologies, pedagogies, languages, and philosophies. These Ways of Knowing are respectfully woven into the tapestry of learning, research, scholarship, creativity, and community engagement; to be a university that removes institutional structures, policies and practices that represent barriers to Indigenous faculty and staff, and any marginalized group (Airini, 2021, Truth Telling Report).





Métis Sash

The Métis Sash is a symbol of present-day Métis identity but had many uses in the early days, often functioning as a rope or a belt. The Infinity sign (∞) on the Sash symbolizes two cultures together and the continuity of the Métis culture. The Sash uses traditional woven patterns and colours to represent individual Métis communities.

ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan Symposiums

Purpose

ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan symposiums function as a tool to help diversify the efforts of implementing the Indigenous Strategy at USask. These symposiums promote collaboration, learning, and innovation for staff, faculty, students and leaders. The symposiums function as touch points in the fall and spring support the learning required for successfully implement through each of the four phases of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. It is a place to ground the work being done by focusing on what it means for ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan to be gifted to USask, hearing Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Knowledge Holders, and kēhtē-ayak, to learn how to navigate challenging barriers for Indigenous Peoples. It is important work to uplift ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan, and these gatherings assist with creating a vision for better engaged and to promote the success of Indigenous students across campus. These symposiums promote the antidote: *nothing about us without.*



Spring 2022

During the Internal Truth and Reconciliation forum, the phase one presentation was delivered as a concurrent session to expose a greater audience to ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. This presentation offered an opportunity for the audience to ask questions and begin to see the value in scheduling a phase one presentation session for their unit with OVPIE.

Fall Symposium 2022

In 2022 the first symposium focused on the work of Edwards School of Business, Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching and Learning, and College of Agriculture and Bioresources. These units identified ways in which ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan was being addressed in their units. Themes that arose from this symposium were: course development, community engagement, social change, communications, culture, and education.

The value of Indigenous-focused courses was emphasized, highlighting their role in providing diverse perspectives. The conversation also underscored the need for community engagement and the transformative role of education in societal change. The discussions touched on resource allocation, stressing the importance of not overburdening the Indigenous community, and the need for dedicated resources. Several personal reflections and aspirations were shared.



Buffalo

The Buffalo symbolizes subsistence, strength and the ability to survive. The Buffalo is a spiritual animal as it provides so many things, including food, clothing, shelter and tools.

Spring 2022

During the Internal Truth and Reconciliation forum, the phase one presentation was delivered as a concurrent session to expose a greater audience to ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. This presentation offered an opportunity for the audience to ask questions and begin to see the value in scheduling a phase one presentation session for their unit with OVPIE.

Fall Symposium 2022

In 2022 the first symposium focused on the work of Edwards School of Business, Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching and Learning, and Agriculture and Bioresources. These units identified ways in which ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan was being addressed in their units. Themes that arose from this symposium, were course development, community engagement, social change, communications, culture, and education. The value of Indigenous-focused courses was emphasized, highlighting their role in providing diverse perspectives. The conversation also underscored the need for community engagement and the transformative role of education in societal change. The discussion touched on resource allocation, stressing the importance of not overburdening the

Indigenous community and the need for dedicated resources. Several personal reflections and aspirations were shared, focusing on understanding the land, supporting Indigenous youth, and ensuring accountability in message development. Questions were raised about how to assess people’s movement towards Indigenization in a way that is authentic to them and how to assess Indigenous course outcomes. Concerns were also raised about the lack of Indigenous voices in USask communications and the lack of representation in committee work, highlighting the importance of representation and communication. These discussions reflect a comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities in promoting Indigenous culture and education.

Spring Symposium 2023

Safety, Representation and Right Relations.

The goals of the spring 2023 gathering were to provide a space for the campus community to come together and to foster thoughtful discussion around how ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan influences the work we do at the University of Saskatchewan. Esteemed Elders and Knowledge Keepers shared stories, highlighting what it means to uplift ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. Shifting the format to focus on





Drum

Traditionally given to men for ceremony and prayer, the Drum is the heartbeat of the Earth, and feeds our spirit. The Drum has the spirit of the deer and the tree that were offered as a gift from the Creator for the Drum, and it guides people home.

a single or paired commitments was developed with the idea to creating more meaningful and consentrated conversations. Senior leadership expressed concern regarding the direction of USask and noted the importance of how the strategy advances Indigenization and decolonization both locally and nationally. The shift from three to now four phases became significant. The need for additional opportunities to dialogue about the strategy after phase one presentations was included in the journey to implementation.

Fall Symposium 2023

Promoting Wellness

The university is integrating wholistic healing supports for the Indigenous community, emphasizing wellness and self-determination. Elder Norman Fleury highlighted the collective responsibility to make the campus a wellness-promoting space symbolizing a transformative journey into self-determination. Senior leadership pledged commitment to ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan, an Indigenous strategy advancing Indigenization leading to transformative decolonization. Dr. Janet Tootoosis announced the new Department of Indigenous Health and Wellness, emphasizing personal wellness and community development. Dr. Angela Jaime emphasized accountability

and intentionality in implementing sustainable systemic change. Calls to action for health are being implemented by the Indigenous health team, including a mentorship program for new clinicians. Lastly, the need to address racism in the wellness strategy was recognized to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach.

Spring Symposium 2024

Stewardship

More information coming soon.

Moving Forward

The opportunity to utilize the gift is a privilege, especially when preparing for bi-annual symposiums. Reviewing ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan in advance of the symposiums ensures a meaningful and positive outcome for engagement. Engaging with senior leaders and members of campus building relationships, fostering collaboration at a leadership level and awaking understanding together ensures success of the symposiums. Uplifting and exemplifying ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan is a responsibility shared by all. We are all part of the university; it is everyone's honour and obligation to create safe and accountable spaces for all.

