

Telling the Story

Phase 4 ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan: The Gift Past, Present, and Future

To know where we are going, we must reflect on where we have been. ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan: The Gift (Indigenous strategy), began with community; the understanding that this work must be led by Indigenous people and with respect. This meant centering Indigenous voices in all development and implementation plans, for every aspect of the institution. Indigenous voices are uplifted to help guide the vision of the strategy. The implementation began when ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan was gifted to the University of Saskatchewan August 20, 2021. The gift was an invitation to reset relationships and move toward truth and reconciliation. Reciprocity must be a key factor in the implementation and understanding of what this gift offers. Specifically, for non-Indigenous peoples this gift should enlighten and guide them in every aspect of their work at the university. The 7 commitments provide a path forward toward ethical space which will continue transforming scholarship, research, teaching, and engagement with Indigenous Ways of Knowing at the centre. These commitments work together in tandem, not separately.

We each hold a shared responsibility in upholding and implementing this strategy. It is not a singular event or initiative, but rather a collective understanding and commitment that permeates through all we do. Centralizing the concept of *nothing about us without us*, ensures we uplift the voices of Indigenous peoples. We are reminded by ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan that we are connected to the land in which we live, work and play. This connection honours and embraces our kēhtē-ayak and respects Indigenous languages, protocols, stories, histories, and Ways of Knowing which connect us to the land.

Telling the Story

Phase 4 reporting is about reflection and commitment to ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. The stories will reflect the impact on the current and future of Indigenous peoples who study, work, and research at all University of Saskatchewan campuses. The following framework will provide a guide for colleges, schools and Vice President portfolios to create their five-year report. This process is grounded in storytelling. Colleges/schools/Vice Presidents are asked to articulate the Indigenous initiatives and engagement from past, present and looking toward the future. This work must contribute to a model of **critical systems change*. All seven fundamental commitments must be present in the stories of each initiative.

** Critical systems change: A holistic, strategic approach to transforming a system by addressing its root causes, not just symptoms, to create sustainable change. This involves shifting underlying structures, policies, and attitudes by working across different parts of a system to achieve a new, more effective institution.*

Seven Fundamental Commitments

- Safety – Creating safe spaces for Indigenous peoples to thrive
- Wellness – Supporting holistic health and wellbeing
- Stewardship – Honoring responsibilities to land, people, and knowledge
- Representation – Ensuring Indigenous voices are present and heard
- Right Relations – Building respectful, reciprocal relationships
- Creation – Supporting innovation rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing
- Renewal – Embracing change, growth, and transformation

Report:

Phase 4 will be the opportunity to tell the story and model stewardship of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. There will be consultations and data collected to support the storytelling. The goal of the August 2026 report will be to demonstrate sustainable impact by assessing the implementation of *critical systems change* at the University of Saskatchewan.

The report will reflect the college/school/Vice President portfolios work toward uplifting Indigenous voices, creating sustainable pathways for Indigenous student success, supporting the well-being and success of Indigenous faculty and staff, and making *critical systems change* in policy, procedures and development in the university.

Timeline:

Send all inquiries to ovpie@usask.ca

- All college/school/Vice President (VP) portfolios move toward phase 4
- Dean's and VP's assign a designate/committee (quick email to Angela)
- **December 2025:**
 - **December 2025**, designate/committee book meeting with Angela and Carson to support colleges/schools/VP portfolios on this journey.
 - Guidelines provided to Senior Leaders and their designate/committee
 - Review guiding documents on OVPIE webpage
- **February 2026** check-in . This will be a time to ask questions.
- April check-in and symposium (**Friday, April 17, 2026**) . (This is a time for us to look at a rough draft, answer questions and talk things through.)
- Dean/Vice President must review and approve final report before it is submitted to OVPIE
- **June 1, 2026**-report due to OVPIE

 - Follow up from OVPIE to designate/committee.
 - Draft University report completed by **July 1, 2026**
 - OVPIE will publish report on the 5-year anniversary of the gift: **August 20, 2026**

*Please reach out to OVPIE at any point of the timeline for questions or support.

Synthesis & Final Report Outline

Report Sections

- Purpose, scope, and guiding principles
 - Reflections across key dimensions
 - *Critical systems change* achievements
 - Language shifts, policy evolution, cultural transformation
- How each of the 7 commitments are embodied
- Program & policy highlights
 - New initiatives and procedural reforms
- Indigenous success stories
 - Students, Faculty, Staff
- Recommendations and plans moving into years 5-7
 - Renewal, sustainability, and continued growth
- Conclusion
 - Synthesis moving forward
 - Reflection on the last 5 years of learning as a college/school/portfolio

Questions and themes:

Guiding Themes (past, present, reflection, future):

- What has been done?
- What challenges have you faced in implementing ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan? (please do not use resourcing or financial as a challenge)
- What has been learned?
- How will/have you used these learnings to move forward?
- What are the next steps?

Past:

- Name the concerns/issues/events that have led the university to need/support/implement an Indigenous strategy. We must speak Truth before we can Reconcile.
- What initiatives were in place before the gifting of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan?
- How did you begin your journey as a college/school/portfolio with ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan after August 20, 2021?
- What initiatives have directly contributed to the implementation of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan for your college/school/portfolio?

Present:

- How are initiatives resourced?
- What *critical systems changes* are planned?
- What reflections does your college/school/portfolio engage in after work/initiatives are in place?
- College/school/portfolio must show how ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan weaves into college/school/portfolio strategic plans.

Reflection:

- Tell us how you evaluated these initiatives?
- How will/have you used these learnings to move forward?
- What were key takeaways from the engagements/initiatives?
- What has been learned?
- Demonstrate the impact of the college/school/portfolio journey with ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan.
- How has ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan provided a platform for colleges and schools to experience reconciliation, decolonize curriculum, foster improved relations, etc.?
- What areas of the college/school/portfolio lacks engagement with ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan?

Future:

- What are the next steps towards implementation of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan?
- Be direct, how will you collectively move forward?
- Tell us how ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan will be implemented in the future?
- What is your plan?
- What steps are you going to take for the implementation to be successful going forward? These steps will become your commitments in future phases of the implementation of the strategy.

Guiding Framework of Reflection

- *Seven Sacred teachings* as guides: love, respect, courage, honesty, wisdom, humility and truth.
- *Indigenous Ways of Knowing* are honoured,
- Indigenous principles over personalities,
- Reciprocity,
- Self-determination,
- Relational accountability,
- *Critical systems change* approach (policy, process, pathways for students, etc.).