

FLEMING COLLEGE

Aboriginal education and student success go hand in hand

Working closely with our Aboriginal Education Council (AEC), Fleming College is committed to developing and supporting Aboriginal education through curriculum, programs, services and research that meets the needs of our Aboriginal students.

Fleming College has been engaged in Aboriginal services and support since the early 1990's. We have progressively hired employees and planned events that support Aboriginal student success and have educated the greater College community about Aboriginal culture.

Like many colleges, Fleming College had been following the process undertaken by CIGAN to develop an Indigenous Education Protocol (IEP). When the Protocol was released in December 2014, the College decided to start by assessing our readiness to sign the Protocol. We wanted to ensure that we understood and were committed to the principles.

Seven Principles:

1. Commitment to making Indigenous education a priority
2. Ensure governance structures recognize and respect Indigenous peoples
3. Implement intellectual and cultural traditions of Indigenous peoples through curriculum and learning approaches relevant to learners and communities
4. Support students and employees to increase understanding and reciprocity among Indigenous and Non-Indigenous peoples
5. Commit to increase the number of Indigenous employees with ongoing appointments through the institution, including Indigenous senior administrators
6. Establish Indigenous-centered holistic services and learning environments for learner success
7. Build relationships and be accountable to Indigenous communities in support of self-determination through education, training and applied research

An internal group, consisting of the Vice President Academic, Associate Vice President Student Services, Dean, School of General Arts and Science and members of our Aboriginal Student Services department met to map each of the seven principles of the protocol against our existing programs and services. A draft document was written which included a review of our current state and a draft work plan that described future initiatives. This was presented to our AEC for discussion who suggested we also map our work plan to the recommendations emanating from the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action (TRC) document and the College's Strategic Plan. This suggestion led to several next steps:

- Development of a themes and linkages document that illustrates broadly how the College's Aboriginal activities relate to our internal planning documents, the Protocol and the TRC's Call to Action.
- Development of Fleming's Multi-year work plan that maps out how we will aspire to meet the seven IEP principles

- Development of a framework that is designed to track accountability and progress

Some of these initiatives include the hiring of new employees, marketing and student engagement, education about the IEP signing, honorariums for engaging and sharing Elder time, professional development for employees and students, and researching and applying for funding opportunities. To see the documents online, please visit <https://department.flemingcollege.ca/aec/>.

New Service Initiatives

Our Aboriginal Services team works in collaboration with both internal and external partners to enhance our capacity and offerings. We are in the process of adding to the team with the hiring of a Traditional Knowledge Keeper. This position will further advance the college's ability to promote Aboriginal student success through a culturally sensitive approach as well as assist employees with their relationship to traditional knowledge.

We have developed partnerships with Aboriginal community agencies for assistance with professional development for employees. This has resulted in an overall increase in employee understanding of the Aboriginal experience. These initiatives include working closely with the Academic schools to partner on a variety of activities and events to address Indigenous knowledge including elevating knowledge of Aboriginal history, culture and contemporary issues.

In partnership with Trent University the College launched a pre-orientation program for new Aboriginal learners. The program is called "Biishkaa" which means "Rise Up" in Ojibwa. Students arrived at Fleming College two weeks prior to startup and were immersed in a program that included traditional events and ceremony, access to Elders, tours of the campus and all the helping services, as well as, field trips to local locations of interest. It is through these types of partnerships that we are able to have an impact on our students' experiences.

New Academic Initiatives

Indigenous Perspectives Designated Programs:

Fleming College offers Indigenous and Non-Indigenous learners in select programs, the opportunity to obtain an Indigenous Perspectives Designation (IPD) to complement their diploma. The IPD provides students with knowledge and skills that will enable them to work effectively with First Nations communities.

We realize that many students coming to Fleming College may not have been exposed to the history and culture of Canada's Indigenous people either during their academic studies or lived experiences. Since many of these students will be working with Indigenous people in a variety of

capacities, it is important that graduates of Fleming College understand, appreciate and respect Canada's Indigenous peoples. The goal of these offerings is to provide both academic and applied opportunities for this learning to take place over the duration of a student's time studying at Fleming.

The Indigenous Perspectives Designation framework, which was created in consultation with academic leaders, faculty, student services staff and approved by our AEC ensures there is rigour, quality and consistency in our Indigenous Perspectives Designated programs. The framework document identifies principles, seven graduate level learning outcomes, and the program components. A program wishing to offer the IPD must: provide the opportunity for their students to take two general education courses (GNED49 Introduction to Indigenous Studies and GNED128 Indigenous Knowledges) which are taught by Indigenous professors from the School of General Arts and Science; modify vocational learning outcomes to include Indigenous content in each semester and ensure that the program meets the seven graduate level learning outcomes of IPD. Within GNED128, students will create a portfolio of their Indigenous learning journey and they will take part in a number of cultural activities both on and off campus.

Initially there were two programs that met the IPD requirements. This fall we will be adding one additional program and next fall we will be adding several more programs. The student response to the GNED courses has been very strong both in IPD programs and in non IPD programs which has required us to offer many sections of both courses.

We will be evaluating the IPD programs by talking with students, graduates, faculty and employers to ensure the IPD designation is valued and provides graduates the knowledge and skills to work effectively with indigenous communities.

Partnerships with Indigenous Post-secondary Institutions and Communities:

Fleming has offered several programs in local First Nations communities to meet a specific need of the community. Alderville First Nations approached us to offer courses in welding to a number of members of the community to assist with their project to establish a solar farm. The program was delivered partly on-site in Alderville and in the welding labs at Fleming.

Fleming had a successful offering of our Forestry program on-site in Munsee- Delaware in partnership with the Anishinabek Educational Institute (AEI). We are currently exploring other partnership opportunities with AEI.

Acknowledgment

While a great deal has been accomplished at Fleming, there is always more that we can do. As we move forward it will be in a respectful, collaborative manner acknowledging that we live, learn and work on the traditional land of the Mississauga Anishnaabe people and specifically in William's Treaty Territory.