

Mission Statement:

Vision College is proposed as a unique learning environment that brings together Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in an interdisciplinary approach, rooted in Indigenous values and epistemological principles, to develop students in physical, mental, and spiritual spheres. Its goal is to fully develop human beings through an Indigenous Liberal Arts Education.

Background:

The Indigenous population is underserved in North American post-secondary education. Indigenous students underrepresented at the post-secondary level, and while there are subject to Occidental systems of education, which are foreign and of marginal utility. The need for Indigenous controlled post-secondary education was outlined in 1996's Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, yet this has not been realized. Thus far progress has been limited to the development of Indigenous Programming in mainstream universities, partially as an attempt to recruit the growing population of Indigenous Youth (University of Manitoba wants to raise the Aboriginal Population on campus from 7% to 15% by 2020). This is a partnership with the University of Winnipeg.

Precedent:

Thus far two post-secondary institutions have attempted to create a similar project to Vision College. St.-Boniface University, affiliated with the University of Manitoba, is geared to serve the small French population, and has been successful in maintaining their student body at 1300. In addition, Ontario's Algoma University has signed a Covenant to support the Shingwauk Kinooamaage Gamig, a sister-institute which shares the campus, which provides and Anishanaabe foundation for education. Vision College would build on the work and precedent set by these institutions to develop wholly Indigenous-rooted programming. Vision College would benefit from a formal partnership with an accredited university.

Necessity:

The situation of first nation's communities is serious. In all cultures, the health of a nation is dependent on its level of education, and the cultural identity that is transmitted through education. It is also clear that attempts to assimilate Indigenous cultures through education based on foreign values has been considerably damaging to the Indigenous population. One of many reasons for this damage was the reduction of Indigenous peoples to the role of receiver of education, rather than a stakeholder in the process. Vision College would be part of the movement to rebalance education with Indigenous thought as a foundation. The economic health of the Indigenous will be boosted by further education. On average, Indigenous peoples earn 12% less over their lifetime than the average Canadian, which is in part attributable to education levels. Vision College will equip Indigenous Canadians with the skills, knowledge, and credentials they need to prosper.

Structure:

Vision College would be structured as a four year, multidisciplinary program. Courses would be administered in block format, one course taken at a time, for 3.25 hours a day, five days a week, for roughly 4 weeks per course (59 contact hours), allowing students to concentrate on specific courses rather than juggling multiple. Students would be expected to take 8 blocks per year.

The introductory course, part of the Foundation Program, would be the "Cornerstone" which would serve as introduction to the themes of Vision College and its multidisciplinary approach, based on the question "What is knowledge?" From there, the Foundation section would consist of 15 additional required courses crossing disciplines. The Foundation Program ends with the "Question," in which students develop a major question that will guide further study. Following the Foundation program, is the Concentration Program (6 courses), in which students investigate one theme in the context of their question. Following the Concentration Program is

Experiential Learning, 1-4 blocks, in which students participate in non-classroom learning, encouraging practical application. Students are then given a minimum of 3 blocks in which to study elective designed to complement or enhance their area of interest. Finally, students would take their final block to develop their “Keystone” a final presentation bringing together the totality of their learning over 4 years, which would be presented to the faculty and students.

Each student would consult with faculty and academic advisors in order to find a path that best serves their interests and educational progress.

Finances:

Revenue

Revenue will generate from several streams. As with any post-secondary institution, is tuition is first. Students are required to pay \$3000 per year, roughly \$375/course, at the beginning of the year. In the event of medical necessity, tuition may be credited. An estimated 500 students would generate \$1.5 million in revenue. Standard attrition rates yield a more modest \$1.05 million. Additional fundraising and endowments would be sought.

A contribution of \$1.5Million, or about half of the cost of providing a quality education to all students who are interested in learning with an Indigenous philosophy, is requested from the Federal Government. We are looking for funding from the Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP). This funding would fill the recommendation of a non-exclusive post-secondary institution as outlined by the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples and provide pride for Indigenous Canadian and especially and all Canadians about different (but equally valid) ways of knowledge.

Cost

Full time staff: 15 Professors would be paid an initial \$50000 per year, teaching 7 courses, costing \$750000. The head of school receives \$80000. Additional support staff would be kept minimal and essential at first, but would include secretaries, ICT, recruitment, Fundraising, tutors, and elders. Costs would be expected to hit \$1.3 million. Additional funding for building the campus and culture of the university could come from federal grants and the Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP), which must be greatly expanded regardless.

Location:

This institution of 500 students and 50 staff would require considerable space, yet there are many locations in Winnipeg in need of infrastructure development, and would therefore benefit from the presence of Vision College. A campus that necessitates 25 classrooms, office space, hospitality services, lecture and concert halls, and residences, included both single and family housing, would significantly invigorate a struggling section of the city. The location most in need and most attractive of this sort of improvement is the central Point Douglas quarter. Vision College would promote significant, long-term, and positive change most needed in this area of Winnipeg.

Future:

The establishment and operation of Vision College will improve the economic, cultural, and national future of Indigenous Peoples. This program will help establish a sense of control and pride for Indigenous peoples, and nearly every government recognizes the importance of post-Secondary education in economic activity. Vision College is not only a viable solution to several Indigenous issues, but it is scalable. This structure can be replicated and modified to meet the needs of Indigenous peoples around the world. At its core, the focus on non-Occidental values and individual methods of learning and knowledge are applicable in a multitude of environments.