



PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO COUNCIL

March 2023

USask implements Indigenous membership/citizenship verification policy

The *deybwewin* | *taapwaywin* | *tapwewin*: Indigenous Truth Policy recognizes the inherent right of Indigenous Peoples to determine membership/citizenship verification with documentation through their governance, customs, traditions, and procedures.

A policy focused on Indigenous citizenship/membership verification through documentation is now in the implementation phase at USask.

USask has [launched a new website](#) to share information about the [deybwewin | taapwaywin | tapwewin: Indigenous Truth](#) policy, which ensures that a verification with documentation process will be completed by Indigenous people holding Indigenous-specific employment positions, student scholarships, or other forms of material advantage created for Indigenous Peoples. Verification documentation will be required for all incoming assertions of Indigenous membership/citizenship by members of the university community where that claim may result in a material advantage or where the absence of verification would be otherwise contrary to the principles recognized in this policy.

Verification with documentation can take many forms, and these will be defined by Indigenous governments. Examples of verification with documentation can be, and are not limited to, a letter from a community's governance body, an Indigenous government-issued membership or citizenship card, or a status card issued by Indigenous Services Canada. Prior to the implementation of *deybwewin* | *taapwaywin* | *tapwewin* at USask, verification of Indigenous membership/citizenship relied upon self-identification.

The policy was [approved by the USask Board of Governors](#) on July 8, 2022. The name of the policy, *deybwewin* (Saulteaux)| *taapwaywin* (Michif)| *tapwewin* (Cree), means truth—truth to self, truth to each other, truth to the ancestors, and truth to the land. Its creation was [guided by a task force](#) of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Language Teachers, and other Indigenous community and campus leaders.

Johnson Shoyama Graduate School (JSGS) awarded \$1.75M to support municipalities in advancing sustainability

Johnson Shoyama Graduate School (JSGS), at USask and the University of Regina, has been awarded \$1.75 M by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Centre to strengthen the capacity of municipal governments to move towards a net zero future.

Through the [Governing Sustainability Municipalities \(GSM\) Project](#), JSGS faculty, executives-in-residence, and research associates will work with municipal governments to identify obstacles and opportunities for developing actionable, practical, and innovative solutions for meeting their sustainability objectives.

The GSM project will help municipalities fill in these gaps by identifying the types of “green-oriented” policy expertise and capacity needed to balance their priorities and accelerate sustainable transitions at the municipal level. Specific attention will be placed on key dimensions of equity, diversity, and inclusion to ensure that sustainability efforts don't harm underserved populations. Key considerations will also include how to foster co-operation and collaboration among municipalities, and how to engage the people and organizations affected.

As a priority, the GSM team will create a Saskatchewan Municipalities Sustainability Index that will provide open-access and comprehensive mapping of past municipal practices. This will become a benchmark for tracking future initiatives, and a conceptual map of the interactions among different aspects of this complex policy area. The team will also compile a list of stakeholders from local and provincial governments, business, academia, and other sectors into a Saskatchewan Sustainable Municipalities Stakeholder Database. This tool will become a valuable resource for municipal administrators looking for advice on how to set and reach their own sustainability goals, and for policy-makers looking for information on innovative solutions happening in Saskatchewan communities.

Indigenous Achievement Week – March 6 – 10, 2023

Indigenous Achievement Week (IAW) is an annual USask event that celebrates Métis, First Nations and Inuit students, staff, faculty and alumni's successes and contributions.

This year's IAW is scheduled for March 6 to 10, 2023.

Throughout the week there will be various events hosted by USask units and colleges. Including [The Indigenous Student Achievement Awards Ceremony](#). The ceremony will take place on Thursday, March 9, at the Gordon Oakes Red Bear Student Centre. The awards celebrate Indigenous student success. Students will be honoured for their academic achievement, community engagement, leadership, research and resiliency.

For more information on events throughout the week, please visit the [Indigenous Achievement Week site](#).

USask project to improve soil health through knowledge sharing network receives \$1.4 million from Weston Family Foundation

A new project at USask has been awarded \$1.4 million through the Weston Family Soil Health Initiative to develop land-based training workshops for First Nations communities, land managers, and producers who farm First Nations lands.

The \$10 million Weston Family Soil Health Initiative seeks to expand the adoption of ecologically based beneficial management practices (BMPs) including cover cropping, nutrient management (4R principles) and crop diversification/rotation that increase soil organic matter to improve biodiversity and resiliency on agricultural lands across Canada.

The project, Indigenous Soil Health Learning Circles for Resilient Prairie Agroecosystems, aims to establish a network to share evidence-based, culturally significant outreach and education to improve prairie soil health, biodiversity, and soil organic matter for First Nations agroecosystems. USask soil scientist Dr. Melissa Arcand (PhD) will be working in partnership with Mistawasis Nêhiyawak, Saskatchewan Aboriginal Lands Technicians, and the International Buffalo Relations Institute. The Soil Health Learning Circles will share soil health knowledge from both an Indigenous and Western science-based perspective with First Nations and farmers who farm First Nations lands across the Prairies, focusing on the prairie-parkland region of Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba.

New USask research Chair to focus on Métis Governance and Policy

The Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S), USask, and Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy (JSGS) have committed a combined \$1,130,000 over four years to support the establishment of a JSGS Research Chair in Métis Governance and Policy—the first of its kind in Canada. The funding will also support scholarships and internship opportunities for verified Métis students and the development of a Métis governance training program.

Appointed to the research chair is Dr. Kurtis Boyer (PhD), JSGS assistant professor, advisor to USask’s Office of the Vice-Provost of Indigenous Engagement, and citizen of MN–S. In his new role as research chair, Dr. Boyer’s work will enhance the genuine decision-making authority of the Métis Nation by exploring ways in which governance and the policymaking process can be guided and informed by Métis culture, values, and tradition.

Of the total funds committed, \$20,000/year will be allocated to attract and support Métis students interested in conducting research and increasing scholarship in Métis governance. Boyer will also work collaboratively with the provincial graduate school’s USask and University of Regina campuses to develop an MN–S internship program for Métis undergraduate and graduate students. The internship program will help students gain valuable career experience and establish a professional network while providing MN–S with high-quality policy work and research capacity.

Lastly, as a key component of the funding, Boyer will work with the JSGS Executive Education unit to develop a Métis Governance Training Program for staff and elected officials at MN–S and other interested organizations.

Dr. Verna St. Denis continues work as Special Advisor to the President, Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression

I am pleased to announce that Dr. Verna St. Denis has accepted an extension to her role as Special Advisor to the President, Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression (ARAO) for a two-year term. Dr. St. Denis retired from her faculty role in December 2022 and will serve in the role of Special Advisor on a part-time basis.

Based on her extensive knowledge and building on work completed to date, Dr. St. Denis will continue to advance strategic priorities that will contribute to sustaining the university's focus on anti-racism/anti-oppression. These priorities include:

- Leading the development of a broad strategic vision for anti-racism/anti-oppression for USask
- Contributing to the design and delivery of ongoing education and training for leadership, faculty and staff
- Identifying possibilities for credentials (micro-credentials, certificate programs, degree requirements, etc.) related to anti-racism/anti-oppression

Please join me in thanking Dr. St. Denis for returning to this role and continuing this very important work for USask. I also encourage you view a recent On Campus News article written about [Dr. St. Denis' 45-year journey at USask.](#)