



September 8, 2026

Tānsi,

We have arrived! The National College of Indigenous Scholars (NCIS) was created in early 2026 as a First Nations University (FNU) initiative sponsored by the Mastercard Foundation's Elev Program. Current research shows that Indigenous scholars make up approximately 1.4% of all scholars across Canada: A shockingly low number. NCIS aims to get to know this 1.4%, learn about their experiences, find ways to support them as they work through career progressions, and promote their work.

Dr. Shauneen Pete (NCIS Dean) completed a mapping review of the existing literature on Indigenous mentorship and then completed a mixed-methods study engaging Indigenous scholars in a survey about their experiences with mentorship. Behind the scenes, the NCIS team also generated a list of the 1.4% of Indigenous scholars in Canada, with approximately 670 scholars now on that list. With the contact list in hand, NCIS has been busy creating the first two of three advisory circles. One is comprised of FNU faculty and the other is a diverse group of Indigenous scholars from across Canada.

During our advisory circle meetings in August 2026, members were invited to dream/visualize what an Indigenous-led faculty development program could look like in terms of content, areas of focus, strategies, ideas for implementation, and areas needing prioritization were explored. We heard what some of the needs and concerns are. Simply put: There is a high need for Indigenous professional development support and mentorship across institutions in Canada.

As mentioned, the NCIS team are now drafting ideas for an Indigenous-led faculty development plan including but not limited to: A webinar series (due to come out this October, see our social media/website for details), module-based mentorship, onboarding/new hire mentorship, the establishment of regional hubs to create support networks, one-on-one or regional grouped coaching sessions, and story sharing. Our aim is to make the faculty development pilot program as accessible as possible for





Indigenous scholars. We invite Indigenous scholars working in Canadian higher education to connect with us about our future supports and initiatives.

You can find us through our social media platforms (LinkedIn, Facebook, Bluesky, and YouTube) or our newly established website: www.indigenousscholars.ca. If you wish to contact us directly you can reach out to our Coordinator, Anthony Nickel, at anickel@firstnationsuniversity.ca. To all Indigenous scholars: We want to be “a guiding light illuminating your scholarly journey”

Sincerely,

The NCIS Team

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