

# **Celebrating and Sustaining Indigenous Knowledges through Higher Education**

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## ***Abstract***

*In its intervention at the 10<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2010, the World Indigenous Network Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) acknowledged that despite a history of protracted but limited attempts by Governments globally to address the low participation and graduation rates of Indigenous peoples from higher education at post graduate level, this continues to be an area of considerable concern.*

*This paper speaks to the development of an innovative academic process that profiles the ground breaking work of WINHEC and a cohort of Indigenous academics in developing academic programs designed to address this systemic failure. The concept of these programs was endorsed in 2006 at a WINHEC conference where Indigenous representatives from across the world met to discuss in part, historical and contemporary impediments to Indigenous success within higher education. The goal of WINHEC has been to develop a nested suite of inventive postgraduate awards founded within the scholarship of Indigenous Knowledge which encapsulates an epistemological approach. This has been a ground breaking process that has included collaborative and intellectual contributions of Indigenous academics from diverse cultural nations across the globe and, in particular, Australia.*

*In 2012 the culmination of this dream and the suite of courses developed, honours and embrace the uniqueness of Indigenous Knowledge and the cultural integrity of Indigenous Leadership.*

## **Introduction**

The World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) is a world-wide educational organization. WINHEC pursues self-determination for the World's Indigenous Peoples through education by remaining strongly grounded within their own knowledges and cultures for the protection and promotion of Indigenous knowledges; academic and research frameworks; epistemologies; and cultural integrity.

WINHEC's mission is to develop and support academic programs, research and initiatives and opportunities that assist Indigenous Peoples at the national and international level to pursue their educational goals and community and familial aspirations through higher education. WINHEC through its set of principles aim to empower and transform local and

global education through innovative Indigenous-based postgraduate educational programs that sustains Indigenous leadership through education and research.

Since its formation in 2002 WINHEC has become a lead international accrediting agency for Indigenous tertiary education and research initiatives and systems that identify generic and specific criteria, practices and protocols by which Indigenous Peoples live. WINHEC, through its Accreditation Committee and sub-committees, has established goals and objectives in the development and establishment of international cultural standards for programs that affirm and honour Indigenous Knowledge.

In 2007, WINHEC members endorsed the development of postgraduate programs as the next step in expanding the mission of WINHEC by offering a suite of professional and graduate programs specifically for Indigenous peoples.

Within the suite of programs are specific research programs that have a substantive research component/s.

The broad intentions of the programs are to develop Indigenous only awards for the purposes of:

- developing and sustaining Indigenous leaders & professionals who are scholarly, culturally astute and practiced in fields relevant to, and specific to Indigenous leadership, education and research;
- establishing and sustaining Indigenous professionals in areas related to Indigenous leadership and education including systems and system interactions that embrace Indigenous and non-Indigenous frameworks; and
- providing Indigenous professionals with educational leadership who are practical visionaries possessing knowledge and skills to sustain Indigenous leadership and Indigenous knowledge by implementing quality programs, policies and systems.

Development and preparation of the postgraduate programs by a cohort of Indigenous Australian academics for WINHEC in a collaborative thesis<sup>1</sup> was through a process of developing frameworks for: teaching and learning including the programs; research and research development; policies for academic and research governance. Each framework was underpinned by cultural integrity, achieved through the WINHEC Cultural Standards<sup>2</sup> and an established consultative and collaborative standard and indicators.

## **Rationale and Background**

Since the beginning of higher education within the western academy, Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, have been largely ignored or negated by mainstream education.

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<sup>1</sup> Anning, B.; Arbon, V.; Robertson, B.; and Thomas, G. 2012, *Collaborative Thesis: Indigenous Futures: Sustaining Indigenous Leadership, Knowledge and Education through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

<sup>2</sup> *WINHEC Sample Cultural Standards by* WINHEC Accreditation Authority, 2004. WINHEC Accreditation Handbook (pp. 25-35).

Indigenous peoples of the world have either been forced away from their languages, cultures, customs, families and lands or alternatively have had to contend with a system of education that has failed to provide a framework that is reflective and respectful of Indigenous Knowledge and worldviews. However, in recent years the Indigenous peoples of the world have begun to reclaim their sovereignty and right to educate their own people in a way that it is culturally relevant and meaningful, maintaining their knowledges revitalizing their languages, and taking control of their own destinies. The Indigenous peoples of the world have begun challenging, redefining and reinventing education beginning from birth to higher education. Indigenous peoples continue to challenge western systems to address the cultural ineptness of its programs, policies and practices that fail to include and acknowledge the scholarship of Indigenous Knowledge and do not meet the needs of Indigenous peoples and communities. The emergence of Tribal-controlled colleges across the world such as United States of America, Canada, Saamiland and New Zealand are helping local Indigenous communities to reclaim their heritage/s and to establish quality control of scholarly activities that impact their nations. Ironically, in order to create these changes, Indigenous peoples had to acquire scholarly credentials from the very same mainstream institutions that have failed to include the scholarship of Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. Whilst, acting as complicit agents in the misappropriation, at best, at worst, the theft of Indigenous Knowledge.

Thus, the systemic failure is evident in the disparity that exists world-wide in the numbers of Indigenous people attaining postgraduate awards compared to non-Indigenous people. To that end, WINHEC has begun offering its own accreditation – Indigenous peoples of the world are using their own expertise and authority to validate the scholarly exploration of their own worlds. By offering postgraduate programs in Indigenous leadership and education, Indigenous peoples of the world, through WINHEC, are taking responsibility to raise the levels of their scholarly work in education and other areas through researching and recording their traditional knowledge/s, histories and stories.

This is aligned with the principles and spirit of international treaties and conventions, which WINHEC has been founded upon. The Articles of the 1993 United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples<sup>3</sup>, including Articles 13 to 16 have been used as WINHEC's founding principles. The founding documents of WINHEC affirm these also within their Goals, Objectives, Vision and Mission. The WINHEC also acknowledges and supports the Coolongatta Statement on Indigenous Rights in Education (1999) that Indigenous people have the right to be Indigenous (WINHEC, 2003).

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<sup>3</sup> The UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was passed on 13 September 2007 and adopted by the UN General Assembly.

There are more than 265 million Indigenous peoples worldwide<sup>4</sup> on 6 continents and covering more than 85 countries {627 Goehring, Brian 1993}. As more and more of these Indigenous communities reclaim their right to educate their own people, the need for individuals with higher degrees will increase exponentially. Indigenous people cannot rely upon mainstream education to provide the necessary experts nor initiate the development of the programs. However, it is important that Indigenous people work collaboratively with host site-institutions to develop their own pipeline into higher education and produce their own experts from their own communities in order to preserve their Traditional Indigenous Knowledges, languages, histories and cultures.

### **Comparative Advantage**

Although there were several centres or programs for World Indigenous Educational Leadership, a web search yielded no formal Indigenous postgraduate programs in the world that were developed based on sustaining Indigenous leadership through education whilst incorporating cultural standards at the graduate level; teaching and learning levels for instruction, curriculum and operations; as well as ensuring Indigenous community involvement. WINHEC, through its status as a leading Indigenous education organization, felt compelled to address this area of identified need. Given the emergence of colleges and universities controlled by Indigenous communities around the world, the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century must be the time to create and accredit such programs. The need for faculty/academics and administrators with degrees at all levels is growing at a rate faster than mainstream educational programs can produce. The postgraduate programs aim to produce qualified faculty/academics and administrators who are well-grounded Indigenous leaders but who are also top researchers and scholars in their areas of expertise. Additionally, the programs ensure graduates are culturally sound Indigenous leaders and are developed within frameworks for teaching and learning that enforces cultural integrity and includes the Indigenous knowledge and epistemologies of individuals, their families, communities and Elders.

The postgraduate programs and the structure of the curricula and policy frameworks, underpinned by WINHEC Cultural Standards, will address the issues currently experienced by Indigenous peoples when they enter the mainstream university programs. That is, the institutions' programs and even those managed and delivered in Indigenous Centres tend to conform Indigenous students to western based learning that is inflexible with Indigenous knowledge and does not readily allow for culturally specific programs to be offered. These institutions do not adequately embrace establishing and resourcing programs that allow Indigenous students to draw upon their own knowledge base and to document their own

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<sup>4</sup> Indigenous, as defined in a formal publication on the World Bank website and with statistics on the number of Indigenous peoples, world-wide. [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTINDPEOPLE/Resources/407801-1271860301656/HDNEN\\_indigenous\\_clean\\_0421.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTINDPEOPLE/Resources/407801-1271860301656/HDNEN_indigenous_clean_0421.pdf) (March, 2012)

Indigenous knowledges. The postgraduate programs will provide instructional and design structure that empower the Indigenous learner as they allow for Indigenous ownership of their learning and ensure educational sovereignty for Indigenous peoples in their communities or at the institutional level. Rather than wait for the western institutions to evolve to meet Indigenous peoples' educational needs and their right to document their Traditional Indigenous knowledges, WINHEC has endorsed the development of the suite of postgraduate programs that will make Indigenous educational sovereignty real from 2013 and will be offering enrolment in the postgraduate programs from 2013. The network of Indigenous Nations and countries within WINHEC's membership will provide local Indigenous sites for the delivery and support of the Indigenous students / research candidates. Localising the programs, under the WINHEC international umbrella, allows for the Indigenous knowledges to be local and/or national and/or international. The importance of developing the programs' curricula framework to achieve educational sovereignty allows Indigenous students and research candidates; communities; Elders; Indigenous academics and staff to: incorporate their Indigenous ways of understanding; self-determine and self-manage educational outcomes; value knowledge; respect each group's traditional culture and languages; and, provide ways to transfer these.

There will be a high level of accessibility to these programs for potential students in and near the WINHEC identified sites. A combination of multiple modes of delivery will provide flexibility for students who may elect to continue full-time employment. As is often the case for Indigenous peoples, travel, finances and educational resources can be a barrier to completion. Having postgraduate programs developed and delivered for and by WINHEC in world-wide locations, has distinct advantages.

### **A Conceptual Framework for the Postgraduate Programs**

A conceptual framework of the postgraduate programs was developed with the concept of cultural integrity embedded in the programs. The framework includes overarching principles, goals and objectives; curricula – unit content, learning outcomes and assessment; Cultural Standards; graduate attributes; and governance policies. The framework is underpinned by Indigenous Knowledges and Leadership, the elements of the programs are mapped to the WINHEC founding Goals and Cultural Standards. The programs provide the framework for undertaking units of study. Successful completion of the units, results in attaining graduate attributes that demonstrate the protection and preservation of Indigenous Knowledges, builds and engages Indigenous leadership capacity and fulfills cultural obligations such as being responsive to an area of community need.

## Description of the Postgraduate Programs

The postgraduate programs are unique in a number of ways:

- A theme of inclusiveness is woven throughout required programs. WINHEC, site institutions, staff and students will have rich connections with the Indigenous communities and Indigenous experiences to advantage Indigenous intellectual and scholarly work as well as address diversity issues throughout the curricula.
- The programs will be accredited by WINHEC:
  - as the accrediting/sponsoring agency;
  - in joint partnership with host site-institutions and WINHEC.

WINHEC's oversight of the accreditation is to ensure the cultural integrity of the programs is not eroded by individual institutions.

- The programs combine a traditional core of research and practical application of theory. As an example, the teaching of leadership theory will include an emphasis on Indigenous: research; methodologies; knowledge; educational leadership; epistemologies; and worldviews.
- The programs provide an opportunity for Indigenous educational leaders to conduct their research and writings around existing challenges in education systems.
- The degrees are designed to meet the needs of various constituents and stakeholders:
  - Community based colleges' staff and secondary classroom teachers will learn best practices in education and come to a better understanding of how their Indigenous students learn.
  - Students interested in P-12 teaching and or administration can complement their educational theory and enhance the skill sets required for developing and sustaining Indigenous leadership and providing culturally integral services.
  - Academics/faculty and professionals in discipline specific professions will benefit from the interaction with educators, especially with those career aspects related to training and leadership. Educators will benefit from the interaction because of the increased awareness and the opportunities provided for civic engagement. Students in the programs can expect opportunities for similar types of collaborative research.
- The programs will prove useful to students having educational or other roles in different agencies, as well as those in educational institutions who aren't focused on a career in administration. The theoretical core of the programs, articulating Indigenous

specific skills and knowledge, distinguishes the programs from postgraduate programs offered through other universities and or colleges.

The **postgraduate programs in Indigenous leadership and education** are:

- (i) academically applied programs that are taught and assessed within the academic frameworks applicable to WINHEC and the site institutions.
- (ii) higher degrees for the professional development of Indigenous birth-12, community college, university academics/faculty and administrators.
- (iii) models of holistic transformational leadership/education expressed in postgraduate degrees, enabling graduates to effectively and appropriately experience the world and make it real.

The full-time programs include research only or coursework with a dissertation over three to four years. The part-time programs include research only or coursework with a dissertation over six to seven years. As previously mentioned, flexibility in assessment and evaluation is an imperative consideration. Indigenous cultures have strong oral traditions which should be utilized within formal assessment. Also, new technologies and assisted mediums can be used to develop electronic theses or lead to assessment for the completion of theses. It will satisfy the requirements of similar programs at the various WINHEC identified site institutions.

The units in the postgraduate programs are designed to be transformative, to build an integral Indigenous knowledge base and to give Indigenous leaders, education practitioners and professionals appropriate professional, academic, cultural and research skills that can be applied to their work in institutions, organizations and communities. **One of the skills of transformational leadership or educational leadership is to recognize cultural wisdom that supports the total stock of cultural knowledge and its conventional application.**

No culture has dominance over knowledge and wisdom. For Indigenous peoples, educational leadership relies upon challenges to conventional or western models of education and knowledge. The most fruitful dialogue between Native and Western modes of thought will take place not under the scorching light of scholarly Western intellectual analysis but individually and internally. It will be within individual human minds, through mental and emotional processes of personal transformation that take place as culturally different ideas and values collide. Also, it will occur without the need for any final “proof”, mutual exclusion or conclusive “conquest” of one tradition’s versions over the other”<sup>5</sup>.

Hence, the postgraduate programs seeks to privilege Indigenous ways of knowing and being and does not need another system to legitimize its validity but is complete within and unto itself where the Elders and members of Indigenous communities provide cultural

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<sup>5</sup> Knudtson D and Suzuki D, 1992, *Wisdom of the Elders*, (p.185)

authenticity to the program. The WINHEC cultural standards, the Board of Accreditation, the inclusion of Indigenous Elders and members of Indigenous communities provide the cultural authenticity for integrity to the programs.

### **Cultural Standards and Graduate Attributes**

The postgraduate programs are developed to ensure students will be immersed in scholarly activities of academic studies and research on Indigenous leadership and education with a focus on engaging the philosophies which underpin worldviews. Students will acquire the attributes of knowledge and skills needed to perform with cultural integrity within in their own professions, educational organizations and communities.

The WINHEC Cultural Standards were developed, based on a number of guiding principles for the WINHEC Accreditation Authority (adopted by WINHEC Executive Board on November 10, 2002).

The overall WINHEC Cultural Standards were developed based on the Alaska Cultural Standards and Indicators<sup>6</sup> for program graduates; teaching and learning practice; curricula design; operational characteristics and community involvement. The cultural standards that apply to program graduates have been used to underpin the postgraduate programs' graduate indicators. This ensures their learning outcomes are measured for attainment of knowledge and skills based on maintaining cultural integrity to sustain Indigenous knowledge and culture through developing greater Indigenous leaders. The WINHEC Cultural Standard and indicators used to establish cultural integrity as the underpinning of the programs included: Program Graduates and indicators<sup>7</sup>. The program graduate standard ensures:

- A. *Program graduates are well grounded in the cultural heritage and traditions of their community.***
- B. *Program graduates are able to build on the knowledge and skills of the local cultural community as a foundation from which to achieve personal and academic success throughout life.***
- C. *Program graduates are able to actively participate in various cultural environments.***
- D. *Program graduates are able to engage effectively in learning activities that are based on traditional ways of knowing and learning.***
- E. *Program graduates demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the relationships and processes of interaction of all elements in the world around them.***

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<sup>6</sup> WINHEC Sample Cultural Standards by <sup>6</sup>WINHEC Accreditation Authority, 2004. WINHEC Accreditation Handbook (pp. 25-35).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

A further cultural standard (**F**) that includes a group of six indicators was developed<sup>8</sup> to add to the existing WINHEC cultural standards for program graduates. These new indicators within the standard are based on program graduates becoming stronger leaders:

**(F) Program graduates are leaders and well grounded in the Indigenous and professional knowledge of leadership. Graduates who meet this standard are able to:**

- 1) acquire knowledge through a culturally legitimating process;
- 2) apply knowledge to advantage Indigenous people;
- 3) take responsibility for continued transmission of knowledge, tradition, culture and practices;
- 4) demonstrate capacity to operate within a cultural framework respectful of local protocols;
- 5) exercise authority to protect and preserve Indigenous worldviews; and
- 6) act responsibly on a local, national and international stage/level.

Through the methodology applied in developing the postgraduate programs, Anning, Arbon, Robertson and Thomas<sup>9</sup> identified a further overarching cultural standard and set of indicators based on consultation and collaboration. These are fundamental to the accomplishment of the current WINHEC culturally responsive standards and indicators. The cultural integrity that underpins the performance of Indigenous leaders to engage in culturally astute /appropriate consultation and collaborative practices must align with local Indigenous protocols. The additional and new cultural standard and indicators will assist with establishing the consultative and collaborative framework, necessary to engage Indigenous people, privilege their voices and embed their knowledge and experiences within programs and projects developed.

The new cultural standard and indicators includes the following:

**A) Cultural protocols require consultation and collaboration to underpin the practices of Indigenous leadership.** An Indigenous leader who meets this standard:

- 1) *consults and collaborates with Indigenous peoples, communities and organizations on shared outcomes;*
- 2) *recognizes and involves Indigenous people and the community through consultation and collaboration in identifying important matters that impact working and living in Indigenous communities;*

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<sup>8</sup> Anning, B.; Arbon, V.; Robertson, B.; and Thomas, G. 2012, *Collaborative Thesis: Indigenous Futures: Sustaining Indigenous Leadership, Knowledge and Education through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

- 3) *are respectful, responsible and reciprocate;*
- 4) *values and privileges Indigenous peoples' voices and position on matters;*
- 5) *recognizes and privileges the scholarship of Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous voices and the wisdom of Elders and knowledgeable others; and*
- 6) *respects the cultural protocols and practices of consultation.*

**B) An Indigenous leader who consults and collaborates, respects the cultural protocols and practices of engagement for effective communication.** An Indigenous leader who meets this standard:

- 1) *enables Indigenous people to share their knowledge, experiences and ideas;*
- 2) *provides opportunities for Indigenous people to be consulted and collaborate on issues affecting local, regional, national and international affairs;*
- 3) *provides reports back to the community/ies on decisions and outcomes;*
- 4) *maintains and sustains the principle of cultural preservation and protection;*
- 5) *establishes cultural integrity as the foundation to developing Indigenous programs; and*
- 6) *uses a consultative and collaborative framework to demonstrate integrity and a high level of involvement of Indigenous peoples.*

With regards to assessment of the postgraduate programs and curricula by the WINHEC Accreditation Authority<sup>10</sup> and in line with the Cultural Standards, the following points are a pre-condition for a review and assessment of a program and are examples of:

- locally appropriate and accepted cultural standards against which the cultural integrity of the institution/program can be reviewed and assessed;
- defined sets of guidelines, principles and/or values reflecting the cultural essence to which goals of this program are directed; and
- appropriate cultural contexts that affirm the performance of Indigenous serving institutions and programs.

### **Graduate Attributes**

A set of Graduate Attributes<sup>11</sup> were developed to provide a broad framework for the postgraduate programs and are intended to be interpreted and defined more precisely in the context of each academic program. The Graduate Attributes emphasize attributes which are more amenable to being taught and assessed, so that their gradual development can be measured and documented, and so that students can record them as part of a portfolio of achievement at graduation.

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<sup>10</sup> WINHEC Accreditation Handbook Higher Education, Third Edition, 2010, WINHEC Accreditation Authority, World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium.

<sup>11</sup> Anning, B.; Arbon, V.; Robertson, B.; and Thomas, G. 2012, *Collaborative Thesis: Indigenous Futures: Sustaining Indigenous Leadership, Knowledge and Education through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*

The list of Graduate Attributes included a set of thematic knowledge domains. These are considered essential for effective learning throughout the postgraduate programs and the continuing development within academic programs and the broader WINHEC and host site-institutions' experiences. The experiences will equip graduates to be culturally adaptable learners throughout their personal and professional lives.

The postgraduate programs and unit approval processes require curriculum documentation to show how this is done, both in mapping where particular attributes are reflected in program and unit design, and in relating how teaching and assessment processes make these explicit.

Similarly, the WINHEC academic program review and assessment processes will be informed by Graduate Attribute outcomes. The processes of gathering student feedback on their experience/s will invite students to consider how much their cultural capabilities and Indigenous knowledge for lifelong learning have been developed. The Graduate Attributes will ensure that on completion of the appropriate units in the programs the graduate will be expected to demonstrate knowledge, protocols and skills at advanced levels of understanding for application.

Learning outcomes and objectives were developed for each unit and in accordance with the goals and objectives of the programs. These will also be assessed and measured to graduate student outcomes in accordance with the WINHEC Cultural Standards and Graduate Attributes and/or each host site-institution's Graduate Attributes.

Cultural and academic supervision share equal weighting. This will require research students to have a cultural supervisor who may be an Elder as well as a discipline supervisor, and who are culturally competent, practicing cultural integrity in all areas of their lives.

Curriculum mapping is undertaken at the program and unit levels against the Postgraduate Programs' Goals, Objectives, Cultural Standards and Graduate Attributes. This mapping contributes most prominently to achieving the latter through explicit content development in the curricula and the teaching and assessment towards these.

### **Pedagogical Principles**

The postgraduate programs, including at the unit level are established with the concept of cultural integrity embedded in the programs': Principles, Goals and Objectives; Curricula – unit content, learning outcomes and assessment; Cultural Standards; Graduate Attributes; and Governance Policies. The delivery of the unit will take into account how the unit provides students with content and experiences from a strong Indigenous knowledge position and lens. Of central importance will be the development of communication skills, at the same time, recognising that Aboriginal people embody multi-literacies.

The use of technology within these units assumes Indigenous peoples have always been developers and users and discoverers of multiple technologies. In the modern world this also incorporates technology for teaching and learning.

Self-discovery and self-analysis is embedded in the beginning of each unit to allow students to centre themselves as Indigenous people from and within their own culture and knowledge. Texts and readings for student study will include substantial Indigenous references within each unit to ensure the privilege of Indigenous knowledge and ways of doing and learning is achieved.

### **Delivery Model**

The postgraduate programs will be delivered using specific models and modes of delivery. For example, face-to-face, mixed mode delivery of online and distance education; and Indigenous Australian community-based through block mode residential delivery. It will be important that any mode offered by host site-institutions will not disadvantage Indigenous students' participation.

Fundamental to teaching and learning within the programs are pedagogical techniques that produce a community of learners, capitalizing on a sense of shared wisdom. There is an emphasis on the role of learners and instructors/supervisors in critical reflection and dialogue, using appropriate learning and teaching systems and tools. Given the diverse locations of Indigenous communities across the world, teaching and learning approaches need to be specific and generic to encompass the diversity of locations.

An engagement and mentoring framework, inclusive of cultural affirmation, is planned to be incorporated into the teaching and learning framework of the programs to help inexperienced faculty/academics or students to develop a broader base of Indigenous knowledge expertise. Based on the collaborative development and implementation of the engagement and mentoring framework, syllabi and pedagogical techniques will facilitate learning and teaching methods, and will assist with the evaluation and assessment of students' work.

Teaching, assessment, supervision and research in the postgraduate programs will be underpinned by:

- (i) WINHEC's Cultural Standards;
- (ii) WINHEC's Graduate Attributes;
- (iii) WINHEC's Ethics and Research Standard and subsequent policies;
- (iv) The local Indigenous community protocols;
- (v) Host site-institution's research ethics standards and policies where relevant to achieving quality without denying Indigenous knowledge and ways of doing;
- (vi) National and international Indigenous research ethics standards; and

- (vii) Protocols of recruiting Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff to deliver the program and supervise research.

### **Proposed Enrolment and Offering of Units**

The proposed units and offering of units within each postgraduate program have been identified and developed by Anning, Arbon, Robertson and Thomas for WINHEC<sup>12</sup>. Students have a choice of enrolling in units and can tailor the context of their study to a special area of expertise/ professional discipline that can enable them to develop their own Indigenous knowledge. Individual units can also be used as a pre-degree study option if students do not initially meet the admissions criteria.

### **Program Overview Summary**

An integral element of the programs will be the development of group based learning, whereby collaborative academic study, research and analyses between students and supervisors will be encouraged. In this process students will be encouraged to explore their own worldviews and experiences.

The programs provide the students with the skills to orally and textually defend the spirit of their research, their cultural position as leaders and the place of Indigenous knowledges within higher education. The programs consist of a required number of credit points consistent with those required by host site-institutions for postgraduate programs. This will direct the specific application, progression and examination requirements of the program. The programs have a solid core of research design and methods, including Western and Indigenous Knowledges that will enrich the ability of graduates to conduct appropriate study of challenges and their potential solutions. WINHEC is committed to expanding knowledge of Indigenous education and leadership and empowering Indigenous people to reclaim control over the educational system that impact the world's Indigenous populations. This commitment permeates the curriculum and provides the opportunity for student growth for active roles in the world's Indigenous leadership and education arena at local, national and international levels. Finally, the programs are course work and research focused or solely research-focused with real world applied knowledge to better assist students to become strong Indigenous leaders in Indigenous education around the world.

It is not enough that Indigenous peoples only access Western institutions of education and engage in study that is established within Western knowledge. To build strong Indigenous leaders requires an education system that provides not only western knowledge, but incorporates Indigenous knowledge/s as well as ensures that Indigenous students' develop

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<sup>12</sup> Anning, B.; Arbon, V.; Robertson, B.; and Thomas, G. 2012, *Collaborative Thesis: Indigenous Futures: Sustaining Indigenous Leadership, Knowledge and Education through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

strong characters with cultural integrity that includes values of: respect; responsibility and reciprocity.

### **Program Quality, Assessment and Improvement**

The quality of the postgraduate programs is assured through the implementation of WINHEC policies in conjunction with the WINHEC frameworks for teaching, learning and research, and the capacity of host site-institutions to facilitate these policies within their own governance models.

As with any postgraduate program, the programs will be periodically reviewed, internally and externally. WINHEC has accrediting criteria similar to that of any other higher education accrediting agency. Evaluation and continuous improvement across all of the courses will include:

- Evaluation of aggregate student characteristics on admission to the program;
- Unit evaluations at the end of each semester in the program;
- Exit interviews with all graduates;
- Data on program students including access and retention rates and their overall performance in the programs;
- Established checkpoints for progression of students and final research document and assessment; and
- Follow-up of graduates after one and three years, as well as follow-up with employers and supervisors of the postgraduate programs' graduates; and attending and participating in annual Indigenous programs' moderation sessions involving all countries offering the postgraduate programs.

### **Research Frameworks and Development**

WINHEC, through the WINHEC Research and Journal Working Group, established, developed and published the *WINHEC Research Standards* First Edition (2010)<sup>13</sup>. The document is a compilation of information relevant to research by Indigenous peoples, programs, including the Postgraduate Programs and Indigenous-serving tertiary institutions. It sets out a number of research standards and indicators as a guide to fulfill the requirements of Indigenous peoples' research and their knowledge communities. They include the following:

#### ***Indigenous Research***

- (a) *respects local Indigenous authority particularly that of Elders and respected knowledgeable others;*

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<sup>13</sup> WINHEC Research Standards First Edition (2010)

- (b) *recognises knowledge as part of a living and constantly adapting system that is grounded in the past, but continues to grow through the present and into the future and reinforces this in research approach;*
- (c) *uses the local language respectfully as a foundation for interpretation and meaning;*
- (d) *understands relationships across knowledge derived from diverse knowledge systems;*
- (e) *acknowledges multi-ownership and levels of knowledge; and*
- (f) *addresses community and individual responsibility/ownership of knowledge.*

### **Individual Researchers**

- (a) *work with local Indigenous Elders and Respected knowledge holders;*
- (b) *ensure prior and informed consent;*
- (c) *recognise their responsibilities and the ongoing influences of Western knowledge;*
- (d) *build on the knowledge and skills of the local cultural community as a foundation from which to achieve success;*
- (e) *engage responsibly and effectively in research activities that are grown from,/based on Indigenous ways of knowing and doing;*
- (f) *demonstrate appreciation of the relationships, connections and processes of interaction of all elements in and of the world;*
- (g) *situate one's self and define ones purpose for undertaking research competently; and*
- (h) *develop a critical self awareness.*

### **Research Process and Practice (Enacting Research)**

- (a) *addresses requirements outlined in this document and locally;*
- (b) *incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and practicing in its work linking what is being researched to everyday lives;*
- (c) *works closely with individuals and communities to achieve a high level of complementary research outcomes and expectations;*
- (d) *honours Indigenous Elders and respected knowledge holders scholarship and authority;*
- (e) *recognises the potential of individuals and communities and provides the training as necessary for them to participate powerfully in research; and*
- (f) *accepts responsibility to protect sacred sites, secret and sacred knowledge and other artefacts.*

### **Organisational Practice (Facilitating Research)**

- (a) *has high level of involvement of Indigenous staff and Elders and respected knowledge holders in lead organizations;*
- (b) *fosters on-going participation, communication and interaction between researchers, programs and community researchers and personnel;*

- (c) *recognizes and assures ownership of intellectual knowledge – ownership of data needs to sit with the Indigenous community;*
- (d) *provides remuneration for time and other costs and, dispersal of publication profits to community; and*
- (e) *ensures sacred sites, secret and sacred knowledge and other artefacts are protected.*

**Community Practice (Linking Research)**

- (a) *recognises local Indigenous Elders and Respected knowledge holders;*
- (b) *honours the primacy and validity of Indigenous knowledge as it is defined and articulated locally;*
- (c) *takes an active authoritative role in research while nurturing family responsibility, sense of belonging and cultural identity;*
- (d) *assists new members in learning and utilizing knowledge and information generated through research;*
- (e) *contributes to all aspects of research design, implementation and outcomes for local advantage; and*
- (f) *ensures sacred sites, secret and sacred knowledge and other artefacts are protected.<sup>14</sup>*

The paper titled, *WINHEC Indigenous Research, Principles, Protocols, Ethical Domains and Guideline<sup>15</sup>*, has been written to affirm the WINHEC Research Standards. The Guideline underpins and contributes to Indigenous knowledge continuity through respectfully working with Indigenous knowledges, guiding the Indigenous researcher/s through awareness of the research principles, protocols and ethical domains. The paper positions Indigenous Knowledge as a parallel system to Western Knowledge.

Additional related documents and policies for research that have been developed<sup>16</sup> for the postgraduate programs and for WINHEC in order to provide a framework for research and research development include:

- *Research Standards;*
- *WINHEC Research Integrity Policy;*
- *Student Supervision Policy;*
- *Property Policy;*
- *WINHEC Research and Research Ethics Protocols and Guidelines (addresses Intellectual Property and Copyright);*
- *Candidature for Higher Degrees by Research Policy;*
- *Postgraduate Student Support Policy; and*

<sup>14</sup> WINHEC Research Standards First Edition, pp. 5-7, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Anning, B.; Arbon, V.; Robertson, B.; and Thomas, G. 2012, *Collaborative Thesis: Indigenous Futures: Sustaining Indigenous Leadership, Knowledge and Education through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

- *Examinations and Dissertations Policy.*

## **Standards and Policies Framework for Academic Curricula and Research**

The postgraduate programs will provide instructional and design structure that empower the Indigenous learner as they allow for Indigenous ownership of their learning and ensure educational sovereignty for Indigenous peoples in their communities or at the institutional level. Rather than wait for the western institutions to evolve to meet Indigenous peoples' educational needs and their right to document their Traditional Indigenous knowledges, WINHEC understood the importance of developing the programs' curricula framework. This was needed to achieve educational sovereignty that allows Indigenous students and research candidates; communities; Elders; Indigenous academics and staff to: incorporate their Indigenous ways of understanding; self-determine and self-manage educational outcomes; value knowledge; respect each group's traditional culture and languages; and, provide ways to transfer these.

The postgraduate programs have been established under an academic and research 'Standards and Policies' Framework. They are developed within the context of WINHEC's foundation documents, including the standards for cultural affirmation and accreditation<sup>17</sup> and those for ethical research practice<sup>18</sup>. The development and delivery of curricula and conferral of awards requires activities, actions and decision-making that is supported in policies and governance. The policies, which relate to the academic governance of the development and delivery of the postgraduate programs, cover a range of educational matters including:

- Academic and Research Governance;
- Cultural Accreditation and Affirmation Standards;
- Postgraduate Curricula Development;
- Research Guidelines and Research Standards;
- Candidature for Higher Degrees by Research;
- Student Supervision;
- Student Policies;
- Examinations and Dissertations;
- Academic Rules;
- Assessment; and
- WINHEC Cultural Standards.

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<sup>17</sup> *WINHEC Accreditation Handbook* Higher Education, Third Edition, 2010, WINHEC Accreditation Authority, World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium. The document includes the WINHEC Cultural Standards which is appended as Appendix 2.

<sup>18</sup> *WINHEC Research Standards* First Edition, 2010. WINHEC Research and Journal Working Group, World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium.

## Conclusion

The postgraduate programs are developed to address the issues experienced by Indigenous peoples when they enter the mainstream university programs. Indigenous culture and specific Indigenous programs are not embraced in the mainstream. Indigenous peoples are expected to assimilate and embrace the western cultures and become immersed in the non-Indigenous knowledges and their disciplines. The postgraduate programs of Indigenous leadership and education will ensure students will draw on their own knowledge base as they are designed to empower the Indigenous learner; allow for Indigenous ownership of their learning and doing; and allow for Indigenous educational sovereignty to be a reality from 2013.

The postgraduate programs of Indigenous leadership and education ensure graduates are leaders and well grounded in the Indigenous and professional knowledge of leadership. The WINHEC Cultural Standards have been used to encapsulate the postgraduate programs of Indigenous leadership and education to ensure the protection of the cultural integrity of Indigenous Peoples' globally.

The steps taken by Anning, Arbon, Robertson and Thomas<sup>19</sup> to develop a suite of academic programs for WINHEC will prove to be an invaluable and innovative approach to addressing the systemic anomalies that have impeded the progression of Indigenous peoples in higher education at both the national and international level. The postgraduate programs build upon a series of strategic initiatives that have been sequentially developed since WINHEC created a Global Higher Education Model that affords Indigenous people the opportunity to engage in a sector that will address both their academic and cultural aspirations and needs. The model created for WINHEC by Anning, Arbon, Robertson and Thomas<sup>20</sup> is designed to assist Indigenous people to maintain and sustain their traditions and knowledges, to build a rigorous cohort of future Indigenous leaders that are culturally and professionally astute, and capable of accomplishing the goals of the United Nations Declaration and the Rights of Indigenous peoples

Thus, the future of Indigenous peoples can be maintained and sustained in the traditions and knowledges of the past. Sustaining Indigenous leaders, in order to maintain Indigenous knowledges, is the right of Indigenous peoples to provide their own educational models that allow for their ways of learning and of doing, reinforcing and promoting the right of Indigenous peoples to protect their traditional ways of learning, languages, knowledge systems and world views.

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<sup>19</sup> Anning, B.; Arbon, V.; Robertson, B.; and Thomas, G. 2012, *Collaborative Thesis: Indigenous Futures: Sustaining Indigenous Leadership, Knowledge and Education through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

Note: This article has been published in the *Journal of Indigenous Studies* (TJIS) and *World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) Conference proceedings document and DVD*.