



Northern Ontario  
School of Medicine  
École de médecine  
du Nord de l'Ontario  
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# Northern Ontario School of Medicine Indigenous Reference Group

## Mandate and Terms of Reference

### 1. Preamble and Mandate:

The Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) recognizes the importance of providing spaces for Indigenous voices to be centered within the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. As such, there is a commitment to address broader concerns within Indigenous health including governance, and advocacy. This means ensuring accountability within our own internal processes, within the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, and all other areas of Indigenous health.

The important work pushed forward by the IRG is rooted within and guided by the deep care, concern and love we have for our Indigenous Peoples. Our involvement and intent as Indigenous Elders/Knowledge Keepers, community members, Indigenous leaders, Indigenous learners and representatives of our respective organizations is to ensure that the health and well-being of Indigenous Peoples is prioritized.

The Indigenous Reference Group is established to provide leadership to the Northern Ontario School of Medicine in the areas of Research, Administration and Academic Issues in order to promote excellence in higher learning and ensure appropriate reflection and inclusion of the Indigenous world view(s). The Indigenous Reference Group will serve as the primary resource for the School of Medicine in fulfilment of its social accountability mandate concerning inclusion of both Indigenous learners and the Indigenous world view(s) in the education it provides.

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine's (NOSM) Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) is the Council that provides guidance, direction and advice to the Dean of NOSM as it relates to Indigenous issues, concerns and interpretation. The Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) reports to the Board of Directors through the Dean/CEO of the School of Medicine.

NOSM respects the responsibilities and priorities of the Indigenous Reference Group, and the Indigenous Reference Group respects the policies and procedures of NOSM.

Terminology: Indigenous is a collective name for the Original Peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian Constitution, Constitution Act 1982, recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples - Indians (First Nation), Métis and Inuit. These are three separate Peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

### 2. Membership:

Seats are designated to allow for Indigenous and institutional representation and each member shall be entitled to an Alternate as follows:

#### a) One (1) voting representative designated by each of the following:

- Nishnawbe Aski Nation
- Union of Ontario Indians
- Grand Council Treaty 3
- Independent First Nations (1 representative)
- Métis Nation of Ontario



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- Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres
- Ontario Native Women's Association
- Laurentian University Native Education Council
- Lakehead University Ogiimawin-Aboriginal Governance Council
- Four (4) Indigenous Medical Students (one junior/one senior from each campus)
- One (1) Indigenous Youth Member
- Indigenous Health Professional

### **b) Ex-officio (non-voting) members from the following:**

- Dean (CEO) or his/her designate
- Associate Dean, Community Engagement
- Laurentian University Associate Vice President, Academic and Indigenous Programs
- Lakehead University Vice-Provost, Aboriginal Initiatives
- Indigenous representative; Academic Council
- Indigenous NOSM Faculty member
- Director, Indigenous Affairs, NOSM

### **c) Council of Elders and Knowledge Keepers :**

Further detail regarding the Council of Elders and Knowledge Keepers will be added as the Council is developed.

A member of the Council of Elders will be included at all meetings of the Indigenous Reference Group. The issues arising will determine how many and which members of the Council of Elders will be invited to provide guidance, wisdom and knowledge.

### **d) Ad-hoc Resources:**

- Assistant Dean of Admissions
- Admissions Indigenous Sub-committee
- Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Health, Laurentian University
- Chair in Aboriginal and Rural Health, NOSM
- Undergraduate Medical Education
- Postgraduate Education
- Research
- Faculty Affairs
- Clinical Sciences
- Medical Sciences
- Human Sciences
- Other NOSM internal resources as required

### **3. Term:**

Membership shall be for a three (3) year term with the exception of NOSM's Indigenous Medical Students who will hold a two (2) year term. At the end of their term, each member is responsible to notify their appointing authority and request a letter affirming their



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appointment for an additional term, or alternatively the appointment of a new representative for the Indigenous Reference Group.

In the event an IRG member is absent from three consecutive meetings, the Chair will request clarification of the member's intent to remain on IRG. In the absence of a response, IRG reserves the right to remove the individual from IRG in order to maintain quorum. The Chair will then contact the member's appointing authority and request a new representative be appointed to fill the resulting vacancy.

The Indigenous Reference Group will call upon expertise from various groups in the school and the community at large as required.

#### 4. **Process and Criteria for Selection of Indigenous Community Representatives:**

The representative of the designated Indigenous organizations shall be selected by each organization according to the process most appropriate to their organizational structure.

Criteria for the representatives should include experience, knowledge, interest and a strong commitment to the education, health and well-being of the people in the Indigenous communities in Northern Ontario. The Indigenous Reference Group will recruit candidates where no organizational structure exists e.g. Indigenous Youth and Indigenous Health Professional nominations.

#### 5. **Responsibilities:**

The Indigenous Reference Group is responsible to represent the needs and interests of the Indigenous community at all times. More specifically, IRG is established to provide advice on the following:

- a) NOSM's strategic directions related to the advancement of Indigenous Education which include monitoring and evaluating results;
- b) Implementation of the IRG strategic plan, including monitoring and evaluating results;
- c) Overarching institutional policies and procedures that may affect and/or impact Indigenous students, staff, Council of Elders and Indigenous Faculty.

#### 6. **Accountability and Reporting:**

It is the responsibility of each Indigenous Reference Group member to be accountable and report back to their respective organizations and/or traditional territory accordingly.

- a) Media releases will be provided to members to send to the organizations they represent as a report after each meeting and therefore provide consistent messaging from all members represent.



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### 7. Management of the Indigenous Reference Group Activities:

#### 7.1 IRG Meetings

The Chair will be elected from the representatives identified in Membership Category (a). The IRG Chair will be selected at the spring quarterly meeting. The Chair will assume his/her responsibilities at the spring quarterly meeting and will serve a two year term. The Chair may step aside to vote on an issue by issue basis. The Director of Indigenous Affairs will be designated as Chair in these instances.

The IRG shall meet on a quarterly basis, with additional meetings as required. The annual schedule of meetings will be determined in February of each year. Requests for items to be placed on the agenda will be directed to the Chair via the Indigenous Affairs Unit, who will act as the secretariat to the Indigenous Reference Group. Meeting packages will be distributed one week prior to the meeting.

Quorum shall consist of 50 % +1 of the voting representatives of filled positions identified under Membership Category (a) but will not include the Chair. Meetings will be confirmed one week in advance provided there is quorum.

Decisions will be made by consensus. In the event that a consensus is not possible, a decision will be made by a majority vote by those present at the meeting.

#### 7.2 Institutional Responsibilities

The institution shall pay for appropriate travel, meal and accommodation expenses according to the established accounting practices of the institution.

Indigenous Affairs will establish a secretariat to ensure that arrangements for meetings are made and that strategic directions arising from IRG decisions are carried out on a timely basis.

### 8. Review of Terms of Reference:

The terms of reference will be reviewed every three years for updates or revisions as required.