



**Press release
For immediate release**

Plans underway for a first Indigenous university centre

Québec City, December 12, 2022 – The First Nations Education Council (FNEC) and Université Laval met today to sign an agreement to draft a business plan to be approved by Indigenous leaders as well as by Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur. The business plan will follow a long-term vision of university education by and for the First Nations with the creation of an Indigenous university centre—Québec's first.

The initiative, also called Maison des savoirs, will take a holistic approach to education in accordance with the wishes of FNEC's member communities, providing a lifelong continuum of learning inspired by the values, cultures, and languages of the First Peoples.

Centre governance will be majority Indigenous and will pursue such objectives as meeting the educational and research needs of the First Peoples, recognizing First Peoples' knowledge and understanding in educational materials, and establishing a university teaching model specific to the First Nations.

FNEC and Université Laval will build a plan for a university that reflects the institution's values of teaching, research, and community service. FNEC's strategic objective is to improve student educational outcomes and in so doing help its communities deal with a range of socioeconomic issues.

We continue to work together to respond to the calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), particularly those respecting access to higher education and the establishment of an education system by, for, and with the First Peoples. The university centre, supported by Université Laval all through the process, will be responsible for every aspect of education to ensure that the languages, cultures, worldviews, and knowledge of Indigenous peoples are respected.

“The Ministry of Higher Education is very proud to collaborate and support the First Nations and Inuit in the establishment of an Indigenous University pole. I am absolutely convinced that the pole will be a great success and that it will allow First Nations communities to take another step towards their economic, social and cultural

empowerment. I would like to thank our partners at Université Laval for their essential support in the realization of this important project,” said Pascale Déry, Minister of Higher Education.

“With the support of its member communities, FNEC is committed to pursuing its mission of bringing education entirely under the control of the First Nations. We are confident that the business plan, to be drawn up jointly with Université Laval and the university network, will meet the real educational and training needs of our communities while drawing on and realizing the full potential of First Nations people,” said Denis Gros-Louis, Director General of the First Nations Education Council.

“We’re all on board and enthusiastic about supporting the First Nations Education Council in this series of actions to promote self-determination for First Peoples,” said Cathia Bergeron, Deputy Vice Rector of Academic and Student Affairs. “Working jointly with Indigenous people to improve their access to postsecondary education is a key aspect of self-determination and lines up perfectly with our values.”

About FNEC

FNEC is an association made up of the 22 First Nations in Québec that has been working for more than 35 years to enable First Nations to exercise their right to full jurisdiction over education by establishing a comprehensive, adequately resourced education system designed and managed in accordance with their values and cultures. To find out more, see the FNEC website at www.cepn-fnec.com.

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