News Release

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UCN Organizes to Strengthen Indigenous Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Scholarship

(The Pas, MB) – University College of the North (UCN) announces the appointment of Harvey Briggs as Associate Vice President (AVP) of a new academic department at UCN named “Reconciliation, Research and Academic Innovation” (RRAI).

The new Associate Vice President reports to the Vice-President Academic and Research and leads a department that integrates the work of teaching, learning, research and academic innovation with the work of Indigenization and reconciliation.

“UCN has accomplished a great deal in its efforts to Indigenize our institution and the new department is the next step. It strongly integrates these efforts with teaching, learning and research. The new department will develop shared understanding and praxis in the vital areas of reconciliation, academic programming and teaching, learning and research at UCN,” said Harvey Briggs, the new AVP, adding that “this is a challenge that directly meshes with the very heart of my academic work, and I am looking forward to this new role.”

Creating this new department came after listening to our Elders who have consistently advocated for a stronger focus on culture, language and research: we are focusing our efforts and resources on learning, student achievement and research. UCN’s action in establishing RRAI recognizes that if UCN is not actively engaged in the work of reconciliation in the curriculum and research, then reconciliation is not taking place in the context of an institution of higher education. The reporting structure within the Academic and Research Division recognizes Indigenous content and pedagogy as critical quality issues for UCN.

“If we are not reflecting truth in our programming, if we are not including perspectives valued by our communities and our region, then we are leaving out an important aspect of quality,” said Dr. Dan Smith, Vice-President Academic and Research at UCN. Smith continued, “some of the expected outcomes of the department include building upon our shared understanding of reconciliation, increasing the quality of Indigenous-informed pedagogy at UCN, continuing our goal of listening to our Elders, creating stronger educational and research ties with our surrounding Indigenous communities, and fostering the growth of our reconciliation strategy by undergirding it with a strong academic commitment.”

Dr. Smith added, “This new department recognizes that high-quality scholarship and programming demands that Indigenous content and pedagogy be considered within the context of processes and practices that support teaching, learning, and scholarship. Indigenous content and pedagogy should be incorporated when creating, reviewing, and delivering courses and programs. This new configuration of responsibilities helps to ensure that Indigenous
content and pedagogy are appropriately built into the fabric of curriculum and research support practices for the long-term.”

In creating this new department, UCN is also mindful of the Government of Manitoba’s priority on achieving efficiencies. The creation of a new department led by an Associate Vice President means the elimination of two existing executive positions. The Executive Director of Indigenous Initiatives and Engagement and the Dean of Research and Academic Excellence, positions recently vacated through retirements, will not be replaced. The duties of both these positions have been consolidated in the new Associate Vice President, allowing additional resources to be directed towards direct service provision.

“UCN is taking steps to pursue our strategic directions,” said Doug Lauvstad, President and Vice-Chancellor. “This new change helps us to focus on student success, advancing an agenda of reconciliation, greater engagement with communities and industries, as well as ensuring quality and pursuing responsible administration.”

Harvey Briggs is Anishinaabe and is originally from Ontario. He has extensive teaching and administrative experience from various Canadian universities including Algoma, Cape Breton, Laurentian, St. Francis Xavier, and York, plus Georgian College. Before this appointment, Harvey served as Dean of UCN’s Faculty of Arts, Business, and Science since 2015. UCN welcomes Harvey to this important role.

University College of the North provides learning opportunities to northern communities while respecting diverse Indigenous and northern values.

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