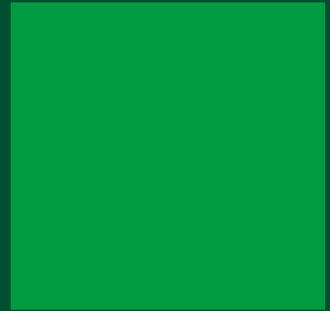


INDIGENOUS CITIZENSHIP & MEMBERSHIP SUBSTANTIATION PROTOCOL

GUIDELINES FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF REGINA



University
of Regina

Office of
Indigenous
Engagement



Indigenous Citizenship and Membership Substantiation Protocol

Guidelines for the University of Regina

Lead

AVP, Office of Indigenous Engagement

Responsibility of

Provost, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Chief Governance Officer and University Secretary
VP, Offices of Research Services and Partnerships & Innovation
AVP, Human Resources

Purpose

The purpose of the Indigenous citizenship and membership substantiation protocol is to uphold the integrity of those seeking roles, opportunities, or benefits based on Indigenous identity by ensuring that claims are supported with appropriate evidence. This protocol is grounded in respect for Indigenous self-determination and community-defined citizenship, and seeks to honour the relational responsibilities between individuals, Nations, and institutions. By doing so, it safeguards the integrity of the individual, the Nation or community, and the organization. It also helps prevent the harm caused to all when false or unsubstantiated claims to Indigenous identity are made.

Background

The University of Regina acknowledges the need for a clear, principled, and respectful protocol to substantiate Indigenous citizenship and membership affiliation. This work arises in response to the increasing number of individuals who have falsely claimed Indigenous identity in order to access resources, benefits, and recognition within the university context.

These false claims cause real harm. They undermine trust, occupy spaces intended for Indigenous Peoples, and disregard the inherent rights and responsibilities that come with Indigenous identity. They disrupt the careful, relational work being done to ensure Indigenous voices, knowledges, and experiences are honoured in institutional settings.

For the purposes of substantiating citizenship and membership affiliation, the term “Indigenous” encompasses the three distinct groups recognized as the original Peoples of these lands: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Each of these Peoples is comprised of diverse Nations with their own histories, languages, laws, and ways of determining citizenship and belonging.

The University affirms that it is not the role of the institution to determine who is or is not Indigenous. That responsibility rests with Indigenous Peoples. The right to determine citizenship and community affiliation is an inherent one — grounded in sovereignty, in self-determination, and in the laws and governance systems of each Nation.

While identity may begin with self-declaration, substantiation requires more. It calls for connection — to community, to family, to place. It asks: Who claims you? Who do you belong to? This is not simply about

personal identification; it is about being recognized in relationship, held in kinship, and accountable to the community from which identity arises.

We also acknowledge the profound and lasting impacts of colonization. Many Indigenous people have been forcibly separated from their families, communities, and Nations through policies such as residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and other assimilative practices. These realities must be held with compassion and care. Substantiation protocols must make room for stories of disconnection, survival, and reconnection.

Scope

This protocol applies to all individuals seeking to access positions, programs, benefits, or recognition designated for Indigenous Peoples at the University of Regina, including but not limited to:

- Faculty and staff recruitment processes
- Student admissions to Indigenous-specific programs
- Awards, scholarships, and research grants with Indigenous identity eligibility criteria
- Participation in governance, committees, and roles identified for Indigenous persons

This protocol is intended to support all units and departments engaged in processes where Indigenous identity is a relevant consideration.

This protocol does not recognize “Indigenous collectives” or organizations that are currently in the process of “rights-seeking” recognition or negotiating their status.

Definitions

Indigenous:

For the purposes of this policy, the term *Indigenous* refers to the original Peoples of this land and encompasses the three distinct groups recognized in Canada: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. These Peoples are comprised of diverse Nations, each with their own histories, languages, governance systems, and protocols for determining citizenship and membership.

Citizenship / Membership:

The formal or recognized belonging of an individual to an Indigenous Nation, community, or governing body as defined by that group’s specific criteria and laws and has legal political rights.

Substantiation:

The protocol by which an individual provides evidence to support their claim to Indigenous identity and community affiliation. Substantiation is not a rigid checklist but rather a relational and contextual consideration of historical, contemporary, familial, and community-based information.

Self-Declaration:

A personal statement of Indigenous identity made by an individual. While self-declaration is a starting point, it must be supported through a protocol of substantiation in contexts where identity-based access is being granted.

Principles

This protocol is grounded in the following principles:

- **Self-Determination:** The right of Indigenous Peoples to define and determine their own citizenship and community members is central and non-negotiable.

- **Relational Accountability:** Indigenous identity is rooted in relationship — to family, community, land, and Nation — and carries responsibilities to those relationships.
- **Respect and Care:** Processes must be carried out with humility, integrity, and respect for the diverse laws, protocols, and histories of Indigenous Peoples.
- **Recognition of Colonial Harm:** Colonial policies have disrupted many Indigenous Peoples’ connections to their communities. The substantiation protocol must be flexible and compassionate in recognizing these impacts.
- **Indigenous Led:** All aspects of the substantiation protocol must be informed, developed, and governed by Indigenous leadership and Knowledge Holders.

Protocol

1. Self-Declaration

Individuals seeking access to Indigenous-specific opportunities must begin by self-declaring their Indigenous citizenship or membership, including identifying the Nation or community with which they are affiliated.

2. Substantiation Protocol

The substantiation protocol may include the submission of documentation, letters of community recognition, citizenship or registry cards, or other forms of relational evidence. The protocol is contextual and must account for diverse forms of connection and belonging. **See Appendix for examples. If any of the criteria from Section 1 are met, no further steps are required, and Indigenous citizenship or membership are affirmed through substantiation.**

3. Review and Validation

If substantiation isn’t affirmed through Section 1 then follow the steps outlined in Section 2 of the Appendix. An Indigenous-led advisory committee, led by the Office of Indigenous Engagement, will be responsible for reviewing substantiation materials submitted under Section 2. The committee will be composed of Indigenous members with knowledge of Indigenous governance, citizenship practices, and regional diversity. **The advisory committee decision is final.**

4. Support and Guidance

Applicants will be supported through the protocol with clear information, access to guidance, and the opportunity to engage in conversation if needed. The protocol will be transparent, relational, and grounded in respect.

Roles and responsibilities

Office of Indigenous Engagement

- Leads the development, implementation, and evaluation of the substantiation protocol
- Ensures that process is grounded in Indigenous laws, protocols, and teachings
- Engages community and Knowledge Keepers in meaningful and ongoing consultation

Human Resources

- Ensures that this protocol is followed in all relevant hiring processes

- Securely links any substantiation documentation to the individual’s personnel file and ensures it is protected under privacy legislation
- Seeks guidance from the Office of Indigenous Engagement where needed

Hiring Committees / Program Administrators

- Ensures that this protocol is followed in all relevant recruitment, admissions, and award processes
- Seeks guidance from the Office of Indigenous Engagement where needed

Indigenous Substantiation Advisory Committee

- Provides relational and contextual review of substantiation claims
- Offers recommendations and guidance to the AVP (Indigenous Engagement)
- Upholds the integrity of the protocol with cultural and ethical responsibility

Individuals

- Engage in the substantiation protocol with honesty and integrity
- Provide truthful and respectful information about their identity and affiliations
- Understand the importance of accountability to community

Review and Accountability

This protocol document will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if needed, by the Office of Indigenous Engagement in collaboration with the Indigenous Substantiation Advisory Committee and relevant university leaders. It is considered a living document and will evolve alongside the university’s ongoing work in reconciliation and Indigenous engagement.

Closing Statement

This policy is not just administrative. It is relational. It is guided by the understanding that Indigenous identity is sacred and rooted in connection — to land, to family, to community, and to Nation. The University of Regina honours this responsibility and carries this work with the respect it deserves.

APPENDIX

Section 1

Written Documentation: Status, Beneficiary, or Citizenship Documentation

The name of the individual must match the name on all documents submitted for verification. In cases where a person's name does not match the document submitted for substantiation, individuals must also provide an original legal name-linking document, such as a change of name certificate, marriage certificate, or divorce order, which links the previous name with the current name (McMaster, 2024).

Claims of citizenship and membership affiliation¹ are potentially revealed in the following documents:²

A. First Nations

- Secure Certificate of Indian Status
- Certificate of Indian Status
- Temporary confirmation of Registration
- Official First Nations-issued identification document

** "Status" does not expire and therefore expired federally issued Status cards will be accepted.

B. Métis

- Citizenship card issued from the Manitoba Métis Federation
- Citizenship card issued from a Métis registry recognized by the Métis National Council
 - Métis Nation of Saskatchewan
 - Métis Nation of Alberta
 - Métis Nation of British Columbia
 - Métis Nation of Ontario
- Valid membership card from one of the Métis Settlements of Alberta

C. Inuit

- Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. card (NTI card/land claim beneficiary card)
- Documentation from one of four Inuit regions in Canada (Inuvialuit, Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, Nunavut), or Inuit communities of Alaska

Section 2

In the absence of one of the affirmations of citizenship or membership substantiation documents observed in **Section 1**, the following protocol may be invoked. Substantiation documentation will be reviewed by

¹ A person who is unable to substantiate their citizenship and members affiliation does not mean they are not Indigenous, nor does it prevent them from self-identifying as Indigenous according to their respective Indigenous traditions, cultures and protocols (Canada, 2024). For the purposes of this process, Indigenous persons (applicants) refers to First Nations, Métis, or Inuit people.

² Information also compiled from: Canada (2024), Carleton University, CAUT (2024); Centre of Excellence of the Canadian Federation; McMaster (2024), Queen's University, University of Guelph, University of Waterloo; Wilfrid Laurier University.

the Indigenous Substantiation Advisory Committee. The Committee may request further information if necessary to complete the substantiation protocol. **The Committee's decision is final.**

A. First Nations

- Written confirmation of membership from a federally recognized band authority, which has its own citizenship code. The letter should be on letterhead, including the Band Registration/Treaty Number; and be signed by a Band Administrator.
- Documentation that confirms a parent, grandparent, or great-grandparent's name has been entered in the Indian Registrar according to the Indian Act, or on the band list of an individual federally recognized band; must be accompanied by a long form birth certificate.
- Signed affidavit from the individual which outlines their current familial relationship to the First Nation, including the specific name of the community. In addition, information which identifies their relationship to and name of the specific enrolled community member, along with a long form birth certificate, is required.

B. Métis

- Written confirmation of Métis identity from a recognized provincial governing body.
- Evidence that a grandparent or ancestor's name has been entered into a registry recognized by the Métis National Council; must be accompanied by a long form birth certificate.
- Signed affidavit from the individual which outlines their Métis identity in the absence of government/registry-issued document. The statement should describe their current membership, citizenship, or family relation to a current Métis community. In addition, information which identifies the name of the specific community, and how they are related and/or enrolled as a community member, along with a long form birth certificate, is required.

** If a person's Métis ancestry is in another province (or they have a card from another province), application for membership can be made to the Métis Nation in the province which the person resides; therefore, if a student is to be residing in Saskatchewan for any length of time, she/he can apply for Métis status through the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan.

C. Inuit

- Proof an ancestor was assigned an Inuit disk number, or that an ancestor's name was entered in a recognized Inuit roll.
- Signed affidavit from the individual which outlines their Inuk identity in the absence of government/beneficiary documents. The statement should describe their current membership, citizenship, or family relation to a current Inuit community. In addition, information which identifies the name of the specific community, and how they are related and/or enrolled as a community member, along with a long form birth certificate, is required.

D. Candidate Personal Declaration with Supporting Reference

The University of Regina also recognizes that Indigenous peoples may be distanced from their families, cultures, languages, and communities through assimilationist colonial policies. They may also be displaced from ancestral territories. In such instances, "a self-declaration statement about their

relationship to a legally recognized Indigenous community, nation, or people” (Queen’s University, 2022; University of Waterloo as cited in CAUT, p. 3) may be submitted for consideration of substantiation.

This statement must provide specific, verifiable information concerning³:

- The applicant’s Indigenous identity including a statement about their existing lived experience and ongoing relationship to a legally recognized Indigenous community, Nation, or People.
- The statement must include specific information about their individual case and corroborating documentation about the rights-bearing First Nation, Inuit, or Métis community such as their treaty, scrip, land claim, and territory or region, along with their declaration on lived experience and/or ongoing relationship with that community (Canada, 2024).
- Documentation for a First Nation person born after 1985 affected by the Indian Act second-generation cut-off rule (Canada 2024).
- Evidence of membership or citizenship in a group that can demonstrate legitimate forms of recognition, including through the courts or through legislation, as a section 35 rights-holding group (Canada, 2024).
- A person must clearly convey their kinship ties and their life story that visibly evidence the struggle to restore family and community relations that have been impacted by colonialism (GII-IKIDONAANIWAN, Queen’s University, 2022)
- As per Queen’s University’s Indigenous Identity Project [Final Report] GII-IKIDONAANIWAN, “...anyone identifying as Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit) at the time of their application and who may be unable to provide any proof listed may submit a personal written story clearly citing relatives and relationships that do not go beyond their grandmother’s or grandfather’s related to lineage....these personal stories can include photos and any other relevant information....Any story about family lore or long-ago relatives should be stated in the form of an affidavit indicating that if anything is false, the employment contract would be invalid” (p. 17).
- Familial relationships and ancestral connections to that community. Consider who claims a person rather than who the person claims to be.
- The circumstances which explain why they are not able to access and provide documentation that connects them to that community.
- Signed and dated written confirmation of full membership, citizenship or enrollment issued by an Indigenous nation (Canada, 2024).
- A reference letter from an Indigenous organization or government able to confirm the applicant’s connection to, or relationship with, an Indigenous rights-bearing nation. The letter must be written by an official community representative (for example, elected or hereditary chief, band councilor, community council president or councilor, assembly member, or a senior non-elected official within a First Nations, Métis, or Inuit government body) is required. The letter, on official letterhead, must clearly indicate whether the applicant has been acknowledged or accepted by the Indigenous community to which they claim a connection. The letter must also include complete contact information of the signer.

³ University of Waterloo, Carleton University, GII-IKIDONAANIWAN, Queen’s University, 2022