



Indigenous Students' Union Dedicated Fee Unit Proposal

2023/2024 Academic Year

We would like to acknowledge that we are located in (amiskwacîwâskahikan) on Treaty 6 Territory, the traditional lands of First Nations and the homeland of the Métis nation. Specifically, we respectfully acknowledge that the University is located on unlawfully stolen and unceded Papaschase Cree territory.

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Introduction

What is the Indigenous Students' Union?

Originally called the Native Student Club, and previously the Aboriginal Student Council (ASC) The Indigenous Students' Union (hereafter, "ISU") was established in the 1990s to foster and empower the growing number of First Nation, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) students attending the University of Alberta. Since then, ISU has continued to represent and advocate for FNMI Students. The goal of ISU is to improve the lives and studies of FNMI students and foster healthy relationships both inside and outside of the Indigenous community. ISU seeks to create a safe and welcoming space to reaffirm and foster balance in spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional health by promoting culture, politics, academics, athletics, and other interpersonal interests.

The Executives of ISU are an all-Indigenous group of students who are passionate about Indigenous student representation and community on Campus. Currently, the Executive is made up of

Malijha Moyan, President.
Elizah McColl, Vice President Internal/External
Victor Olsen, Vice President Consultation & Engagement
Sophie Martel, Vice President Operations

ISU proudly acts as a facilitator at the University, offering a number of cultural events for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students throughout the year. The ISU provides a safe space at 2-20 North Power Plant for students to study, grab a snack, make friends, and socialize. In addition, ISU plays a strong role in advocating for Indigenous students to both the University administration and the Students' Union.

What is a Dedicated Fee Unit?

According to the Students' Union Bylaw 6100 ("A Bylaw Respecting Dedicated Fee Units), a Dedicated Fee Unit (hereafter, "DFU"):

Refer[s] to any entity that collects fees from students through the Students' Union for the purposes of covering operating costs or providing grants under this bylaw.

Currently, 10 DFUs are being collected through the Students' Union, ranging from \$0.93 to \$28.01 per term. DFUs are only collected and paid by undergraduate students; some are opt-outable, and others are not. For a proposed fee to become a DFU, it must pass a referendum.

Those third-party organizations (e.g., the Alberta Public Interest Research Group) to which funds are dispersed are under strict financial oversight.

DFU Platform

Executive Summary

Throughout its history, ISU has continued to advocate for the needs of Indigenous students at the University of Alberta, as well as provide opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike to participate in cultural activities. Funds from the DFU will be divided among five (6) key areas:

- (1) Cultural supports and events;
- (2) Education;
- (3) Aboriginal awards;
- (4) Childcare subsidy;
- (5) Housing Subsidy; and
- (6) Operational costs.

According to the 2017/18 University of Alberta Annual Report on Undergraduate Enrolment, 31,764 undergraduate students are enrolled at the University of Alberta. Of those 31,764, 29,533 are classified as full-time students, while 2,231 are part-time. Without taking opt-outs into account, the creation of a one (1) dollar DFU would generate a total of \$91,945.50.

As a not-for-profit organization, all money generated by the DFU would go directly back to students

DFU Question

The following question will be posed to students by referendum, during the Students' Union election in March:

The mandate of the Indigenous Students' Union (ISU) is to improve the lives of Indigenous students at the University of Alberta and foster healthy relationships within and outside the Indigenous student community. ISU seeks to create a safe and welcoming space for Indigenous students that fosters balance in spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional health through cultural opportunities, political advocacy, academics, athletics, and other interests.

Proposed Funding Areas:

- Increased cultural support and events, including First Nations, Metis, and Inuit ceremonies,
- Operational costs, including upkeep of ISU facilities,
- Indigenous-specific academic and community-based awards,
- Subsidization of childcare for University of Alberta students who parent,
- Subsidization of housing for University of Alberta Indigenous students who cannot afford rent,
- Increasing opportunities for non-Indigenous students to learn about First Nations, Metis, and Inuit history,
- Increased partnership with internal and external groups to create Indigenous-led events at the University of Alberta,

Proposed Fee Conditions:

- The fee will be one dollar (\$1.00) per trimester per student, to be assessed to students enrolled in classes that semester, including the summer/spring trimester.
- Students may opt-out of paying the fee,
- The fee will apply to off-campus students.
 - The fee will be indexed to inflation

Do you support the creation of a Dedicated Fee for the Indigenous Students' Union?

DFU Platform Points

1. Cultural Supports & Events

Since its inception, ISU has been grounded in culture and traditional ceremonies. These strong foundations have allowed us to facilitate student access to cultural events and teachings, such as pipe ceremonies, tobacco tie teachings, smudging ceremonies, fasting teachings, and many more throughout the years.

For our **Aboriginal members**, access to culturally-based support and programming is essential for ensuring a safe university environment. Culture is a fundamental part of health and healing, and the DFU will allow ISU to offer students more opportunities to participate in various First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ceremonies.

For our **non-Aboriginal members**, access to culturally-based support and programming is a way for students to learn more about Indigenous culture. Understanding is the starting to reconciliation, and understanding and respecting Indigenous cultures is fundamental to the Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationship. To promote education and understanding, cultural events and programming have always been open to all students, regardless of Indigeneity. With the passing of the DFU, ISU will be able to offer more First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultural activities and ceremonies.

With the money collected from the DFU, ISU hopes to host and facilitate but not limited to the following ceremonies for students:

- Trimester pipe ceremonies;
- Monthly women's ceremonies;
- Fasting teachings;
- Daily morning smudging; and
- Partnering/supporting other groups for their ceremonies and events.

2. Education

Through our work with the Students' Union and the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee (ARRC), ISU has had the opportunity to engage with many Indigenous and non-Indigenous students over the years. One of the key takeaways from these engagements is the need for educational opportunities for non-Indigenous students to learn about Indigenous Peoples in

Canada. The tenth principle of reconciliation developed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada states:

Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian society.

In keeping with the TRC's principles of reconciliation, funds generated from the DFU will go towards education opportunities for students, faculty, and staff at the University of Alberta.

For **Aboriginal members**, education opportunities can offer a chance to **learn** more about the diverse cultures of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. Moreover, ISU wants to provide Indigenous students the opportunity to share their experiences at the University with the broader public, either by way of speaker series, panels, and mixers.

For **non-Aboriginal members**, educational opportunities will allow students to learn more about the honest history of Canada, both past and present. Learning about the histories of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit is essential. Through forums, presentations, speaker series, and other such avenues, ISU hopes to help foster a community of mutual respect at the University. As an institution of learning, ISU hopes to create space for such learning and reflection.

In addition to the above, ISU is committed to providing students equal access and opportunity to listen to the wisdom and knowledge of elders and traditional knowledge keepers. Specifically, the DFU will allow ISU to provide opportunities for members of the University of Alberta to listen and learn about the traditional and contemporary knowledge of elders. Such opportunities are consistent with the seventh principle of reconciliation put forward by the TRC, which states:

The perspectives and understandings of Aboriginal Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers of the ethics, concepts, and practices of reconciliation are vital to long-term reconciliation.

3. Awards & Scholarships

Scholarships and awards are an important part of ensuring post-secondary education is affordable for students.

With the money collected via the DFU, ISU hopes to continue its current availability of awards for our **Aboriginal members** and **non-Aboriginal members**. Specifically, we have both academic-based and community/leadership-based awards, each valued at a minimum of \$1000.00.

4. Childcare Subsidy

According to the Students' Union 2017 Student Survey, Aboriginal students are nearly four (4) times more likely to be a parent than non-Aboriginal students. Students who parent are faced with the double burden of paying for both childcare and tuition, as well as the burdens of being a student and parent. It is the goal of ISU to help alleviate that burden, even if just a little bit, to ensure that students who parent are given the best opportunity to succeed.

As a result, ISU is dedicated to providing both **Aboriginal members** and **non-Aboriginal members** access to funding to subsidize childcare.

5. Operational Costs

Currently, ISU operates out of the North Power Plant, an aging building across from Rutherford Library at the University of Alberta. Open from 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM during the weekday, the ISU Lounge provides students with space to study, relax, and socialize. Additionally, the ISU Lounge included a kitchen and fridge, both of which are available to members. The kitchen is fully stocked with food and drinks for students to use.

With the funds collected from the DFU, ISU can renovate the ISU Lounge to a respectable standard that our students deserve. As well, the DFU will allow ISU to continue providing more snacks and other food for students. Specifically, it will allow us to purchase healthier and more expensive food such as fruits and vegetables, all of which would be available to students.