

Urban Aboriginal Economic Development National Network



Background Brief:
Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig -
Centre of Excellence in
Anishinaabe Education

Condensed from source documents by Julia Schwamborn, MA
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About the Urban Aboriginal Economic Development Network: The Urban Aboriginal Economic Development National Network is an open and inclusive multi-stakeholder network of researchers and practitioners working in urban Aboriginal and Métis communities. This includes organizations, universities, federal/provincial/municipal and Aboriginal governments, private industry, community groups, and NGO's. The network's focus is on mobilizing economic development knowledge and strengthening organizational capacity.

This paper can be found on the network website: <http://abdc.bc.ca/uaed>

Our vision in creating Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig (University) will preserve the integrity of Anishinaabe knowledge and understanding in cooperation with society to educate the present and future generations in a positive, cooperative and respectful environment. (Shingwauk website. About)

The foundation of Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig (SKG) was laid by Ojibway Chief Shingwauk in 1873. In light of the increasing influence of Europeans on First Nations economies and ways of life, he was of the opinion that education and training in both traditional First Nation and European ways would give his people the best possible chances of success while preserving their history and culture. His vision was initially implemented in form of the Shingwauk Indian Residential School. In an attempt to turn the negative legacy of this Residential School into new, positive opportunities for Ojibway and other students in the future, the Shingwauk Education Trust (SET) has entered into a covenant with Algoma University (AU) in May 2006.

SKG President Darrell Boissoneau expresses hopes for “a new beginning that builds on strong leadership, individual autonomy, and better lives through education” (SKG. About). He emphasizes methodological innovations in the form of formal education acquired through traditional methods. The main research focus is placed on areas which First Nations most benefit from in a contemporary context: Governance and Sovereignty, Treaties and Land Claims, Water Rights and Environmental Issues, and Education and Research. Additional areas of academic interest at SKG are Anishinaabe Law, Anishinaabe Medicines, Anishinaabe Philosophy, Anishinaabe Earth/Science, and Anishinaabe Cosmology.

The Partnership between SKG and AU

The Covenant: The [Shingwauk Kinomage Gamig](#) (SKG) and [and Algoma University](#) (AU) share a commitment to Chief Shingwauk's Vision and its values in the spirit of mutual trust. Chief Shingwauk foresaw a time when a great "Teaching Wigwam" would bring together the best of the heritage of the Anishinaabe and European peoples and cooperatively provide a better future for both through education. (SKG website. About. Covenant)

SET features representation from the Garden River First Nation, Batchewana First Nation, The Anglican Diocese of Algoma, and the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association. SKG is an evolving, independent, degree-granting post-secondary institution. Courses are fully credited by AU and, as part of the University's academic calendar, are open to all AU students. SKG students, in turn, have access to all AU courses and programs and fully participate in AU student life.

Both partners are committed to respectful, inclusive, and innovative education for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students through institutional collaboration. The traditional *Two Row Wampum* development model adopted by both SKG and AU requires respect and support from both partners for each other's goals.

Apart from President Darrell Boisoneau, the SKG Board of Directors consists of a Vice President, a Treasurer/Secretary, and seven members at large representing SET member First Nations and organizations.

SKG builds and shapes its programs based on community consultation and partnerships in order to respond to the students' educational needs. As SKG is still in its initial phase, excellent academic records as well as promotion and recruitment strategies are important to achieve success and growth. The school lobbies for financial support from all levels of government and invites the general public to donate.

Faculty and Programs

SKG staff positions include an Academic/Spiritual Advisor, a Director of Development and Programming, and a Project Coordinator. All positions are filled by individuals with Ojibway heritage. Faculty is specialized in a wide variety of First Nations relevant academic fields including law, linguistics, rhetoric, and anthropology.

Course work at SKG began in the fall of 2007. Currently, two degree-granting programs are offered. The four-year Bachelor of Arts in Anishinaabe Studies deals with twenty-first century Anishinaabe peoples, their history, and their traditions and cultures employing Anishinaabe teaching methods and emphasizing traditional roles and values.

The three-year Bachelor of Arts in Anishinaabemowin is concerned with the in-depth study of the Ojibway language including linguistic and cultural elements. Career goals and interests benefiting from this program are, for example, teaching the language or applying to graduate school in the areas of linguistics or Native Human Services. Other students who might consider this program are those who want to learn more about their heritage or obtain awareness and understanding of Canadian/First Nations policy and government relationships.

All courses offered in these two programs are fully credited by AU and can be applied to a number of AU undergraduate degrees.

SKG and Urban Aboriginal Economic Development (UAED)

SKG contributes significantly to UAED and UAED discussions. Education and Aboriginal capacity building are pivotal in achieving UAED and progress in urban Aboriginal communities. The example of SKG shows that the combination of both formal mainstream education and traditional Aboriginal education subjects and methods can lead to Aboriginal student success. Urban Aboriginal communities and organizations take SKG as an incentive to look for Aboriginal education opportunities in their communities and cities. They should promote existing initiatives to improve urban Aboriginal capacity building, or, in case of a lack of existing Aboriginal education institutions, communities can learn from SKG and other examples how to establish Aboriginal input in the education system.

Another valuable lesson to be learned from SKG in a UAED context refers to the benefits of partnerships. Choosing the right partners and investing in productive, mutually beneficial, trust- and respectful collaboration, as the example of SKG shows, allows for integration of Aboriginal subjects and methods in mainstream education and official recognition and accreditation. As a result, students will acquire a desirable skill set that combines high quality formal education and traditional knowledge, values, and methods. These skills will enable them to make meaningful contributions to UAED and, in a broader context, self-governance and Aboriginal rights advocacy.

The concept of the Teaching Wigwam is the result of the desire that the Ojibway Nation, develop and process resources needed by foreign demands. This was a[n] effort to develop the capacity of the Ojibway Nation, to maintain its[...] possession to resources and lands. The Teaching Wigwam initiative was an importation of skills, not an abandonment of Culture and Identity. (Shingwauk website. About. Vision)

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Sources

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