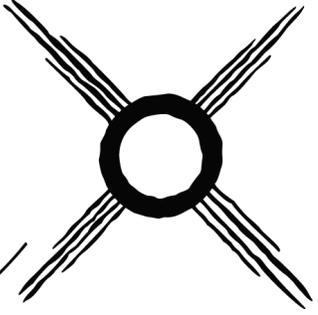


Dechinta 

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in
Advance of the 2019 Budget

A Productive Competitive North: Mobilizing Indigenous Knowledge & TK while Closing the Indigenous Education Gap through support of Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the FINA recommendation in (2016-2017) *That the Government of Canada fund the establishment of Indigenous-controlled universities that respect traditional knowledge and Indigenous languages, have a strong Indigenous governance structure, and demonstrate a commitment to Indigenous values*; Dechinta calls on the federal government for sustained funding for Canada's *only* co-developed, land-based, Indigenous governed and led university. A legacy project for a sustainable north, Dechinta offers a unique interdisciplinary program of study. Dechinta is accredited by McGill, UBC and the University of Alberta. Dechinta combines and provides solutions to all mandates of this current government by investing in the local economy, strengthening partnerships, gender equality, crime, poverty reduction, health and well-being in child and family relationships.

Dechinta is Canada's *only* land-based university; designed by Indigenous people for Indigenous people, open to all Canadians. Since its inception in 2009 Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning has successfully provided ongoing land-based post-secondary education in the NWT. Dechinta has a 0% drop-out rate, which is unprecedented in northern Indigenous post-secondary programs. 100% of Dechinta's graduates have either pursued higher education or entered the labour force (49% pursued further post-secondary and 57% are employed, 97% of these in the NWT labour force).

To meet the Calls to Actions of the TRC, and the mandate of this government, Dechinta calls on the Federal Government to make the following recommendation of investment in the 2019-20 Budget:

- ***Invest 5M/Year for 5 years to ensure a sustained, culturally-safe post-secondary option for Indigenous, Métis and Inuit students and their families***

Dechinta serves as a beacon of Canadian leadership in action through bold, innovative and co-developed responses to systemic inequalities.

About Dechinta

Dechinta is an example of the Arctic Policy Framework in Action:

- Dechinta is a co-developed, holistic, research-based and community driven organization that places families at the centre of our model.
- Our mission is to create healthy, self-determining, sustainable northern communities. We accomplish this mission by delivering land-based learning, research, and employment rooted in Indigenous practice and pedagogy that is culturally safe and respectful.

-
- Dechinta supports economic diversification through knowledge, research and innovation. In 2017 Dechinta employed 18 elders, 17 guides, 7 instructors, and 15 programming experts with 98% Indigenous hires.
 - Dechinta leads and promotes arctic science, arts, culture and Indigenous knowledge through research partnerships and by training the next generation of researchers through capacity and leadership building.
 - Dechinta protects and promotes biodiversity through sustainability, food sovereignty and Indigenous science and land-based work.

Dechinta directly fulfills many of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's education recommendations, including closing the education gap by delivering culturally appropriate and community developed curricula, enabling parent and community responsibility and control, and respecting and honouring Indigenous government relationships.

By ensuring ongoing support to Dechinta, the federal government would be contributing to a measurable, evidence-based, whole-of-government investment towards the TRC call to action to close the education gap within a generation.

Canadian universities generally receive on-going government funding through annual operating grants. To date, Dechinta's success is the result of innovative public-private partnerships.

A registered charity, Dechinta is now poised to take its programs to the next level and become a fully accredited university under the Education Act of the Northwest Territories with forthcoming legislation in 2019. This will support students to stay in their home communities, while also becoming a destination institution bringing people and economic prosperity to the north.

A core federal innovation investment of 5M year/5 years would result in:

- Approximately 150 First Nations, Métis and Inuit jobs (with the majority being outside of Yellowknife within the northern regions).
- In four years, the number of Indigenous degree holders in the NWT would increase by 5%. This model is scalable across regions and geographies.
- With funding, in four years, Dechinta can graduate the first cohort of Northern Indigenous University graduates. This will increase the number of Indigenous degree holders in the territory and provide a steady flow of Northern degree holders for the foreseeable future that will stay in the north.
- By 2030, Dechinta will graduate 440 new Indigenous university graduates. This is a legacy impact-for sustainable economies, and healthy northern and arctic communities.

- Support for free, wrap around Indigenous student and family support in post-secondary will serve as a model for the Canadian Federation of Students call to action for free, universal education. Results of our programming coincide with social and economic development while meeting sustainability and innovation goals for the future.
- The support of this government will serve as a legacy example of whole-of-government solutions to complex issues using evidence-based analysis and ethnic and gender analysis of programming and service delivery.
- The creation of new jobs, distributed across the north in remote communities enhances northern capacity in order to lead and partner in international polar and arctic research, shifting the landscape from research about the north to research conducted by northerners, building a strong and trustworthy knowledge economy.
- Increasing access for Indigenous students to high-quality post-secondary education in a culturally safe environment with free childcare while scaling a proven model for Indigenous education provides awareness and scales proven solutions to the issues that many Indigenous northerners face in their daily lives.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Focused northern investments in education have direct, measurable impacts on productivity. University degrees are directly tied to GDP growth, poverty alleviation, sovereignty and rise in real income:

- Between May 2008-2014, more than twice as many new jobs were created for University graduates than for college and trades graduates combined¹.
- The North needs to fill Northern Jobs with Northerners. Over 50% of the currently un-occupied GNWT jobs require a degree, and only 4.9% of Aboriginal Northerners hold a degree².
- 2015-2030 80% of all NWT jobs will require post-secondary³. The NWT is not ready to fill these jobs. Funding Dechinta will ensure northerners are trained to maximize these opportunities.
- Aboriginal unemployment for degree holders is 1.9% compared to 14% for those without a degree.
- Over their careers, university graduates typically earn 50% more than other full-time workers without a university degree.

¹ AUCC, 2014

² Careers Website, GNWT

³ The Conference Board of Canada/ GNWT Skills for Success S4S, Current Labor Supply vs. Currently Available Labour Supply

- When Indigenous women hold degrees, unemployment decreases to 5% from 20%.
- Northerners want the choice to earn a relevant, land-based degree without having to relocate.
- Education level attainment is the single biggest co-determinant in income earning, health outcomes and poverty alleviation.

Sustainable funding, in concert with Territorial and Private Partners will result in Dechinta expanding our programming and design thus implementing our long-term sustainability strategies. Given the NWT's unique situation in the early stages of implementing devolution, federal support would enable us to expand our programs while we continue to work with the GNWT and Indigenous governments to design an effective model for on-going relationships and support.

A UNIQUE NORTHERN APPROACH to UNIVERSITY

- Dechinta is flexible, innovative and responsive. Embedded evaluation and performance metrics have ensured that responsive programming is reflected in our success as we have **demonstrated return on investment to private and government funders.**
- Dechinta offers early childhood education through to high school on-site support for all families in their quest to continue their education. Families are a core part of Dechinta. The culturally rich, language focused outdoor education programs ensure whole family support, as well as **wrap around services for mental health and wellness.**
- **Dechinta was purpose-built through research** and employs thorough student participation in governance and program evaluation, resulting in cost-effective, results-based programming that is highly recommended by participants on an on-going basis.
- Dechinta designs unique curriculum on critical northern issues identified by communities and research using innovative land-based approaches to teaching and learning. Dechinta teaches both graduate and undergraduate interdisciplinary programs (Governance, Law, Health, Research, Policy, Sustainable, Economic Development, Writing and Communications) building real capacity and usable skills for a competitive research and knowledge sector in the NWT and Canada.
- Dechinta has been nominated to become a U Arctic Member, connecting our unique programming with an international network of students and researchers. This correlates directly with engagement of the Arctic Policy Framework.

A NATIONAL CHALLENGE CALLS FOR BOLD LEADERSHIP

The demand for a Northern University is not currently being met. This hinders national productivity. A sustainable North needs a sustained, safe, culturally relevant Indigenous post-secondary option.

Co-developed, evidence based solutions for the inclusion of TK and Indigenous Local Knowledge are needed: Dechinta is meeting this need while enhancing northern Indigenous capacity and ensuring knowledge mobilization through research and learning.

Dechinta is receiving an ever increasing amount of applications that there is funding for and can no longer meet the growing demand from students without expanding our programming. This year, 65 potential students applied for 30 spaces.

Canada is the only circumpolar country without a circumpolar university. Dechinta is recognized as the global leading evidence-based best practice in land-based Indigenous education.

Dechinta does not receive core or permanent funding. This underfunding hinders student potential. Students should not have to leave the north to pursue a degree unless it is their choice. Dechinta has demonstrated that removing barriers through free post-secondary is cost-effective.

- From 2017-19 Dechinta's funding from GWNT ECE was 500k/yr in contribution agreements. This is in addition to over 1.2 M in Federal and private funding. Dechinta is grateful for the support however, this is not enough to deliver our growing programming. Without secure core funding, operations remain precarious and students cannot rely on a safe post-secondary option.
- In 2018, INAC PSPP was cut, reallocating spending based on population. This resulted in Dechinta losing over 800K/year in funding, despite being the first NWT project to ever receive funding from this pot. This has drastically effected student's ability to continue their university studies in the north.

With funding, in four years, Dechinta can graduate the largest cohort of Northern Indigenous University Graduates (40) in history. This will increase the number of Indigenous degree holders in the territory by 5% and provide a steady flow of Northern degree holders for the foreseeable future.

FACTS

Dechinta has been operating in the NWT since 2009 (offering university level accreditation since 2010). There have been 336 (program) course completions.

- 97% of the students attending Dechinta are Indigenous, 72% are women.
- Dechinta offers integrated prek-12 Chekoa Nı́ htł'èkq̓, Deè Dechinta KidsU school to support families on-site.
- Dechinta is a drug and alcohol free program.
- Dechinta's original curriculum is designed in the north by local knowledge experts, elders and youth.
- Each Dechinta semester consists of 7 – 8 weeks of programming onsite at a remote off grid location followed by 5 weeks of programming in the student's home community where they complete community research projects through supported job placements.
- Dechinta expanded to the Sahtu in summer of 2015 with the Indigenous Boreal Guardian Program and in the Dehcho and Gwich'in Settlement Regions delivering river semesters in the summer of 2017. Dechinta will continue to expand throughout the northern regions with funding offering multiple yearly regional programs.
- Dechinta has received both national and international recognition, and is considered a global leader in Indigenous land-based education.
- Dechinta is currently a major partner in two multi-million dollar SSHRC research grants, *The Initiative for Indigenous Futures* and *Sustainable Water Governance and Indigenous Law*.
- Since 2008, Dechinta has brought over 15M in education funding to the NWT, demonstrating the viability of a sustainable Indigenous knowledge and innovation economy in northern Canada.
- Dechinta operates as a charity with a cost-effective social enterprise model maximizing public-private-government partnerships.

Federal funding for Dechinta will result in measurable actions to close the education gap, increase employment for Indigenous citizens and establish a sustainable innovation knowledge economy in the north. An important investment in social infrastructure, Dechinta is backed by nine years of evidence to inform a best-practice budget investment with measurable outcomes and scalable results.