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Two-Eyed Seeing Model Developed in Cape Breton Drives New National Grant for Aboriginal Health Research

Friday, January 18, 2013

A new, nationally available research grant draws upon leadership that Cape Breton University has demonstrated in bringing together Indigenous and Western approaches for science studies and research. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) announced in December 2012 that it is launching an open operating grant for Aboriginal health research based on the Two-Eyed Seeing model embodied in CBU's unique and innovative Integrative Science program. Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall of Eskasoni suggested the phrase "Two-Eyed Seeing" about 10 years ago as a guiding principle for Integrative Science collaborative research then underway in Unama'ki-Cape Breton and CIHR is explicitly clear in attributing the Two-Eyed Seeing model to Elder Albert.

"The development of this CIHR grant is of profound importance for Aboriginal peoples and health research in Canada," says Cheryl Bartlett, Canada Research Chair in Integrative Science at CBU. "It marks the first time that an Aboriginal Elder's understandings must be used by researchers to contextualize their overall research approach if they wish to apply for a CIHR grant."

Two-Eyed Seeing encourages that collaborators learn to look at matters with two different worldviews or paradigms in mind. Thus, one eye looks at the issue with the strengths of traditional Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, while the other eye looks with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing. In using both eyes together to examine an issue, the strengths of both Indigenous and Western knowledges are brought together for the benefit of all.

Promotion of the concept of Two-Eyed Seeing is a passion for Elder Albert Marshall, along with his wife Elder Murdena. Albert indicates that in the Mi'kmaw language the concept is known as *Etuptumuk*. Albert and Murdena's advocacy of Two-Eyed Seeing has seen them travel, in conjunction with CRC Cheryl Bartlett, across Canada and beyond to promote the concept. They also took the message of Two-Eyed Seeing to the Atlantic Gathering of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada which is conducting hearings into the legacy of the Indian Residential School system across the country. And, they used it to configure the Mi'kmaw contribution within global science celebrations for the International Year of Astronomy 2009.

Both Elders Murdena and Albert have close ties with Cape Breton University. They were conferred the honorary degree Doctor of Letters in 2009 in appreciation of their work in promoting the Mi'kmaw language and culture. Murdena was also a faculty member at CBU from the 1980s until her retirement. She played an integral role in creating CBU's Mi'kmaw Studies program and also the Integrative Science program; the latter envisioned an innovative approach of teaching Indigenous and mainstream sciences side by side. Albert is currently a member of the Advisory Board for Unama'ki College of CBU.

The funding for the new grant is provided by CIHR's Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health. The total value is \$1.2 million, with a single grant maximum award amount of \$200,000 a year for up to three years.



Recent News

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[Boardmore Theatre Puts Comical Twist on Traditionally Dark Play](#)

Tuesday, January 15, 2013

The Boardmore Theatre will be raising the curtain on January 22 for its production of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, written by Luigi Pirandello. The dark comedy is a play within a play about a theatre group preparing for a production. The play runs from January 22-27 with shows starting at 7 p.m., with the exception of the matinee show at 2 p.m. on January 27.

[Cape Breton University Appoints Dr. David Wheeler as Sixth President](#)

Monday, January 14, 2013

(Sydney, NS) - David Wheeler returns to Nova Scotia pledging to put Cape Breton University (CBU) at the heart of the regional economy and international