

Wapiski Mekwan Mamawi Wichitiwan – White Feather Circle of Care Bylaws

Mandate:

As Indigenous medical students, we carry the responsibility and privilege of walking in two worlds, one rooted in the healing traditions of our ancestors, and one shaped by western medicine. We acknowledge that we are studying and practicing on Treaty 1 Territory, the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg, Ininiwak, Anishinew, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and the National Homeland of the Red River Métis.

Our work as the Indigenous Medical Student Association (IMSA) is grounded in our collective commitment to cultural resurgence, community care, and transforming medicine into a space where Indigenous Peoples feel seen, heard, and safe. We honour the path carved by those who came before us and commit to supporting those who come after.

Definitions:

For the purpose of these bylaws:

Executive Council

Refers to the core leadership group of IMSA, consisting of designated executive roles (e.g., VP Internal, VP External, VP Finance, VP EDI, Communications Officer). The Executive Council holds primary responsibility for governance, decision-making, and oversight of IMSA activities.

Council Member

Refers to members of the Executive Council as well as individuals holding designated leadership roles within IMSA (e.g., Committee Leads). Council Members are expected to contribute to decision-making processes, attend meetings regularly, and support the coordination and implementation of IMSA initiatives.

General Member

Refers to all self-identifying First Nations, Inuit, and Métis medical students who are part of IMSA. All members are considered General Members, regardless of level of involvement. General Members may choose to participate in committees, events, or initiatives but are not required to hold a formal role.

1. Name and Purpose

1.1 Name of the Association

The organization shall be known as *Wapiski Mekwan Mamawi Wichitiwan – White Feather Circle of Care* (formerly the Indigenous Medical Student Association, IMSA, and hereafter referred to as “IMSA”).

Naming is sacred. In many Indigenous communities, names carry life, they speak to who we are, where we come from, and what we're meant to do. We recognize that names carry deep cultural, spiritual, and relational significance within Indigenous communities. A name is not simply a label, but a reflection of purpose, identity, and connection to land, language, and ancestors.

This name was gifted through a process grounded in ceremony, community guidance, and the leadership of Elder Margaret Lavallee, Elder George Muswaggon, and Kookum Charlotte Nolin, and reflects our commitment to Indigenous health, relationality, and collective care.

For clarity, continuity, and ease of communication, the abbreviation "IMSA" may continue to be used in informal and operational contexts. The full name remains central to the identity and spirit of the organization.

1.2 Mission and Objectives

IMSA exists to support, advocate for, and uplift First Nations, Inuit, and Métis medical students at the Max Rady College of Medicine. Our mission is grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, and is guided by the responsibilities we hold to our communities, ancestors, and future generations.

Our objectives are to:

- Foster a safe, empowering, and culturally grounded community for Indigenous students.
- Provide peer mentorship, academic support, and connection across all years of training.
- Advocate for Indigenous presence, leadership, and decision-making within medical education.
- Collaborate with faculty, community members, and organizations to strengthen Indigenous health initiatives.
- Amplify Indigenous voices and promote systemic change through truth-telling, relationship-building, and decolonization efforts.
- To promote awareness, understanding, and respect for Indigenous cultures, knowledge systems, and approaches to health and healing among all medical students, with a focus on meaningful learning for those who are not Indigenous, through education, engagement, and advocacy.

At its heart, IMSA is a circle of kinship, a place where Indigenous students can gather, grow, and be supported as they walk the challenging and transformative path of medicine.

2. Alignment with Institutional Policies

2.1 Code of Conduct and University Policies

All members are expected to uphold standards of professionalism, accountability, and cultural humility in line with both the Max Rady College of Medicine's policies and Indigenous teachings.

Members are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful and responsible manner in all activities associated with the Association.

2.2 Equity and Non-Discrimination Commitments

IMSA is committed to creating an inclusive environment free from discrimination, harassment, or lateral violence. This includes upholding the rights and dignity of all members regardless of Nation, background, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ability, or spiritual beliefs, while prioritizing the unique experiences and perspectives of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis medical students.

3. Membership

3.1 Eligibility Criteria

All self-identifying First Nations, Inuit, and Métis medical students are considered general members of IMSA; however, students must opt in to receive communications and participate in IMSA activities by providing contact information to the IMSA. Allyship or honorary membership (non-voting) may be extended to other students, residents, or faculty who demonstrate a commitment to the mission and values of IMSA.

3.2 Expectations of Membership

Membership in IMSA is rooted in mutual respect, community accountability, and shared responsibility for creating a safe, supportive, and empowering space for Indigenous medical learners. All members are expected to:

- Uphold IMSA's mission, vision, and values in their actions and participation, recognizing the sacred responsibility that comes with representing Indigenous Peoples in medicine.
- Engage in good faith with meetings, events, and initiatives when possible, while understanding that wellness and community obligations may impact participation.
- Communicate respectfully and compassionately with fellow members, including Elders, students, faculty, and guests.
- Contribute to cultural safety and inclusivity, including avoiding lateral violence, gossip, or actions that undermine others.
- Commit to ongoing learning and reflection related to Indigenous health, self-location, cultural humility, and the responsibilities that come with being part of a collective.

These expectations are intended to foster a relational space of belonging, growth, and shared purpose. IMSA values support and restoration over punishment; when concerns arise, they will be addressed with care and cultural grounding.

3.3 Process for Membership Review or Removal

It may be necessary at some point for a member of IMSA to be removed. Reasons may include but are not limited to: members not fulfilling their responsibilities, not attending meetings or acting in a manner inappropriate for a member of the Council.

The following must occur for the removal of a member of the Council to be considered:

- i. A consensus between 4 of the 5 following Executive Members:
 - a) VP Internal
 - b) VP External Sr.
 - c) VP Finance
 - d) VP EDI
 - e) Communications Officer
- a) With the exception of gross inappropriate behaviour, at least one verbal and one written warning should be issued by the VP Internal Sr. or VP External at least one month apart to the Executive Member in question before removal to indicate deficiencies.
- b) Any Council Member who is removed from medical school shall be removed from their office.
- c) Any Council Member who ceases to be a member of their class, or takes a leave of absence, may be removed from their office at the discretion of the IMSA Council.
- d) Any Council Member may withdraw from their position by submitting a letter of resignation to the VP Internal.

In the event a Council Member is removed or withdraws:

- a) The responsibilities of the removed/withdrawn Council Member shall be divided amongst the remaining Council Members until a replacement may be found.
- b) A by-election shall also be held as soon as possible to fill the vacant position if deemed necessary by the IMSA Council, with the following clarifications
 1. For positions in which there is a junior position, the corresponding Junior Representative will fill the Senior role for the remainder of the current year as well as the following year to complete their two-year term of office.
 2. At the discretion of the Council, another student may be elected in a by-election to fill the vacated Junior Representative position for the balance of the academic year, at which point the position will be reopened for the following year's election.
 3. A removed Council Member may not run for the position again.

4. Council Structure and Roles

4.1 Council Composition and Responsibilities

All members of the Executive Council have a duty to act in the best interests of IMSA, exercising integrity, accountability, and respect in their roles. Council members shall adhere to a Code of Conduct established by IMSA to guide their actions and decision-making.

Council Officers

Vice President (VP) Internal Sr.

Preferably a clerkship student (M3/M4)

- Shall serve as the primary point of contact and spokesperson for IMSA, fulfilling role comparable to a Senior Stick in representing and advocating for Indigenous medical students
- Shall represent the Indigenous medical students at The University of Manitoba to the RFHS, UGME and Ongomiizwin
- Shall call, form the agenda of, and Chair all meetings of the Council. If the VP Internal is unavailable, the Chair may be designated to another member of the Executive Council.
- Shall oversee all IMSA activities, ensuring that the policies and procedures of the IMSA are carried out and that obligations of the Council are fulfilled,
- Sits on pre-clerkship and clerkship evaluation committees
- Co-organizes the MSEI workshop alongside Outreach Committee and Ongomiizwin
- Updates Council on curriculum developments and progress meetings
- Shall be one of the official signatories of the IMSA Bank Account
- Shall appoint student representatives to external committees and/or working groups as required

Vice President (VP) Internal Jr.

Preferably a clerkship student (M3); if unfilled, an M2 may serve.

- Shall work closely with and under the guidance of the VP Internal Sr to learn the responsibilities of the position and support continuity between academic years
- Shall attend meetings and committees alongside the VP Internal Sr where permitted, and receive updates on meetings restricted to clerkship students
- Shall assist the VP Internal Sr with advocacy, Council responsibilities, projects, correspondence, and other tasks as required
- Shall become familiar with relevant RFHS, UGME, Ongomiizwin, evaluation committee, and working group processes
- Shall work with the VP Internal Sr throughout the year to support a smooth transition into the senior role

VP External Sr.

Typically held by a second-year student

- Previously “Local Officer of Indigenous Health (LOIH) Sr.” within the EDI Working Group
- Shall represent IMSA to external bodies including CFMS, Doctors Manitoba, PARIM, CPSM, CMA, government and all other organizations
- Shall be the senior voting member of the IMSA to the CFMS
- Partners with Doctors Manitoba on year-round programming and contributes to the development and implementation of the Doctors Manitoba Mentorship Program
- Coordinates IMSA delegation for CFMS General Meetings: arranges travel and accommodations; oversees MMSA/CFMS travel award process
- Chairs the CFMS Subcommittee and reports to Council
- Takes notes and debriefs IMSA after external meetings
- Shall be one of the official signatories of the IMSA Bank Account

VP External – External Jr.

Typically held by a first-year student

- Previously “Local Officer of Indigenous Health (LOIH) Jr.” within the EDI Working Group
- Shall assist the VP External Sr. with all aspects of their position
- Shall proxy for the VP External Sr. in their absence
- Shall matriculate to the role of VP External Sr. following their term as Junior.

VP Finance

- Opens and maintains IMSA’s bank account
- Coordinates grant and funding applications
- Oversees funding allocations and creates fiscal reports twice per year
- Shall be one of the official signatories of the IMSA Bank Account

VP Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

- Supports collaboration between IMSA and the Manitoba Medical Students’ Association (MMSA) on EDI initiatives, reflecting the collaborative intent of the role
- Engages in EDI initiatives and advocacy
- If non-Indigenous, holds a non-voting role

Communications Officer

- Manages IMSA’s social media and email communications
- Shares scholarships, events, and research opportunities
- Coordinates meeting scheduling, Zoom links, and minutes
- Supports advocacy and campaign efforts

Indigenous Community Member or Staff Representative

- Participates in Council discussions, providing cultural and community insight, advice and guidance
- Shall sit on the MMSA Council as an ex-officio, non-voting member

Class Representatives

M1, M2, M3, and M4 Representatives

- Sit on their respective Class Councils to represent Indigenous students
- Ensure events and programs are inclusive and culturally safe
- Attend class council meetings and debrief IMSA with updates and notes

Committees and Coordinators

Indigenous Community/External Outreach Committee

- **Committee Leads:** M1 and M2 OE Service Learning students
- **Committee Members:** Any interested Indigenous medical students
- Organize outreach events with Ongomiizwin
- Coordinate mock interviews and Migizii Agamik presentations (2x per year)
- Delegate volunteers for Ongomiizwin events

- Maintain mentorship connections with prospective Indigenous students

Indigenous Internal Wellness Committee

- **Committee Leads:** M1 and M2 reps from the Indigenous Health Promotions Group (IHPG) through MMSA
- **Committee Members:** Any interested Indigenous medical students
- Plan wellness workshops and cultural events (e.g., Orange Shirt Day)
- Lead IMSA orientation during O-Week
- Collaborate with the Northern Remote Interest Group

Curriculum Committee

- **Committee Leads:** IH1 and IH2 reps (typically M1 and M2 students)
- **Committee Members:** Any interested Indigenous medical students
- Represent Indigenous students on UGME Indigenous Health curriculum committees
- Meet with course leaders at least once annually
- Support and provide feedback on the Student Educational Exposure Program to ensure meaningful Indigenous health learning experiences

Research Committee

- **Committee Leads:** Determined by Council based on interest
- **Committee Members:** Any interested Indigenous medical students
- Share opportunities related to BSc Med, MD/PhD, MD/MSc
- Support IPAC-aligned projects and TRC Calls to Action
- Host researcher meet-and-greet or info sessions

4.2 Appointed vs. Elected Positions

Elected Positions:

- VP External - LOIH Jr
- VP Internal
- VP Finance
- Communications Officer
- Class Representatives (M1-M4)

Appointed Positions:

- VP External - LOIH Sr (automatically transitioned from Jr)
- Indigenous Community/Staff Representative
- External Outreach Committee Leads & Members
 - OE Service Learning Students
- Internal Wellness Committee Leads & Members
 - IHPG Leads
- Curriculum Committee Leads & Members
 - IH1/IH2 Representatives
- Research Committee Leads & Members

Voting Eligibility:

Voting privileges for elected positions are reserved for self-identified Indigenous medical students enrolled at the Max Rady College of Medicine. Voting structure is as follows:

- **Executive Positions** (VP External – LOIH Sr., VP Internal, VP Finance, VP EDI Jr., Communications Officer):
 - Voted on by **all Indigenous medical students (M1–M4)**
- **Class Representatives (M1–M4):**
 - Voted on **only by Indigenous students within the respective class year**

This structure ensures representative leadership, cultural accountability, and meaningful participation from all stages of training within the Indigenous medical student community.

4.3 Creation and Dissolution of Roles

- A written proposal outlining the need for a new role or dissolution of an existing role must be submitted to the Council.
- The creation or dissolution of any role requires approval by a simple majority vote of the membership at a General Meeting or AGM.
- All changes to Council roles must be reflected in the bylaws during the annual review process.

5. Elections and Council Formation

5.1 Election Procedures and Timelines

- Elections shall be held annually for all positions designated as elected roles under Section 5.2. The election process shall follow this timeline:
 - **O-Week Information Session:** An election information session will be held during Orientation Week for incoming students.
 - **Announcement of Elections:** First week of September
 - **Nomination Deadline:** Nominations must be submitted by the Monday of the second week of September
 - **Voting Period:** Opens immediately after nominations close and remains open until the morning of September 15
 - **Results Announcement:** Voting results and selected Council members will be announced on September 15
- All election dates and deadlines will be communicated clearly through IMSA communication channels to ensure transparency and participation.

5.2 Chief Returning Officer (CRO) and Voting Procedures

- A CRO shall be appointed by the IMSA Council prior to each election cycle. The CRO must be a student who is not running for any position in that election.

- The CRO shall be selected by a majority vote of the Council and will serve only for the duration of that specific election cycle.
- The CRO is responsible for:
 - Overseeing and managing the nomination and election process
 - Ensuring fairness, transparency, and confidentiality
 - Responding to any concerns, conflicts, or questions from nominees or voters
- Voting shall take place online using a secure platform accessible to all eligible Indigenous medical students.
- Each eligible voter may cast **one vote per position**. Members running for positions may vote, but may not cast multiple votes even if they hold more than one role.
- The CRO will verify and count the votes. Election results will be announced on the date outlined in the official election timeline.
- In the event of a tie, the CRO shall facilitate a run-off vote within 48 hours, unless another resolution is reached by consensus of the Council.

5.3 Founding Year Council Formation

- The 2025–2026 academic year will serve as the founding year for the Indigenous Medical Student Association (IMSA).
- The provisions in this section shall take precedence over other sections of these bylaws for the duration of the founding year and shall expire following the completion of the first formal election cycle.
- All Indigenous medical students, regardless of year, are welcome and encouraged to join the Founding Council.
- Students who contributed to the creation of IMSA may take on leadership roles, but all interested Indigenous students are invited and encouraged to participate.
- The Council will aim for balanced representation across years and experiences.
- An open call for interest will be shared in late summer 2025, with the Council finalized by September 15, 2025.
- Roles may be filled by discussion, consensus, or a simple internal vote.
- The Founding Council will oversee the first election cycle and may hold interim roles until successors are elected.

5.4 Vacancies and Mid-Year Appointments

- Vacant or mid-year positions (i.e., roles that become available after the regular fall election cycle) shall be filled through a Council-appointed process.
 - Where deemed appropriate by the Council, a by-election may be held, particularly for senior or high-responsibility roles
 - Positions may also be left unfilled at the Council's discretion, especially if deemed non-essential for the remainder of the academic year
 - If a position remains unfilled after the regular election cycle, the Council may, at its discretion, open the role to non-Indigenous students for that academic year, prioritizing candidates who demonstrate a strong commitment to Indigenous health.
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6. Meetings

Operations/Communication:

IMSA will utilize digital communication platforms to support coordination and engagement among members. The primary mode of communication is currently WhatsApp; however, alternative platforms (e.g., Microsoft Teams, Slack, or Discord) may be used as needed. Virtual meetings may be held via Zoom.

6.1 Frequency and Scheduling

- The IMSA Council shall meet at least **once per month** during the academic year, unless otherwise determined by the Council.
- Additional meetings may be called at the discretion of Council members.
- Notice of meetings shall be provided to all Council members at least 72 hours in advance, except in urgent circumstances.

6.2 Meeting Participation and Decision-Making

- Attendance at Council meetings is required for all Executive Council members as part of their responsibilities.
- The Council recognizes that students have busy schedules; members who are unable to attend a meeting are expected to provide advance notice to the Communications Officer, VP Internal, or another designated Council member.
- Repeated absences without communication may result in a check-in or review by the Council.
- Quorum for decision-making is met when a simple majority (50% + 1) of voting Council members are present.
- Each voting member holds one vote. Members holding multiple positions may only vote once.
- Decisions shall be made by a simple majority of those present, unless otherwise stated in these bylaws.
- Meeting minutes shall be recorded and shared with Council members within one week by the Communications Officer. A reviewed version may be shared with all Indigenous medical students, with private or sensitive information removed for clarity and confidentiality.
- The Council may move into an in camera (closed) portion of a meeting to discuss confidential or sensitive matters. During these discussions, detailed minutes will not be recorded; however, key decisions will be documented to ensure accountability.
- Guests who are not general members are welcome to attend meetings if the guest has a matter to discuss with the council. Their presence shall be approved a minimum of one day prior to the meeting.

6.3 Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Shall be held at the beginning of each academic year and shall be open to all members.

The AGM shall serve as a space to:

- Present and approve the annual budget
- Propose and discuss changes to Council structure and positions

- Propose and vote on amendments to these bylaws
- Share updates on IMSA activities and priorities for the year

Notice of the AGM shall be provided to all members at least two (2) weeks in advance via email and other official IMSA communication channels, and shall include the date, time, location, and any proposed agenda items or motions.

Quorum for the AGM shall be defined as 50% of members present.

6.4 Ad Hoc Council Meetings

- Ad Hoc Council Meetings may be called to address urgent or time-sensitive matters, or emerging issues that require timely discussion outside of regularly scheduled meetings.
- Ad Hoc Council Meetings may be called by the VP Internal or any member of the Executive Council.
- Notice for Ad Hoc Council Meetings may be provided on shorter timelines, including same-day notice, using IMSA's established communication platforms (e.g., WhatsApp), where appropriate.
- Quorum requirements and decision-making processes for Ad Hoc Council Meetings shall be consistent with those outlined in Section 6.2.
- A brief record of decisions made during Ad Hoc Council Meetings shall be documented and shared with Council members as soon as reasonably possible.

7. Finances and Resource Management

7.1 Banking and Financial Structure

- a) The organization's revenue may come from membership fees, grants, donations, sponsorships, and profits from events or programming.
- b) Membership fees, if applicable, shall be determined annually and may be collected through institutional tuition payments or direct collection.
- c) The organization may hold one or more bank accounts in its name. All funds received by the organization shall be deposited into its designated account(s).
- d) The fiscal year of the organization shall begin on Sep 1 and end on Aug 31 of the following year.

7.2 Authorized Access to Funds

- a) Authorized signatories on the organization's bank account(s) shall include the VP Internal and Vice President Finance.
- b) All cheques or electronic payments must be authorized by both VP Internal and VP Finance.
- c) Disbursements of funds must be approved through a motion passed at a meeting.
- d) The organization may act as a fiscal agent for student-led initiatives or subcommittees with association support.

7.3 Budget Development and Approval

- a) The Vice President Finance shall prepare an annual operating budget in consultation with the Executive Committee. The budget will include outlined funds for various portfolios and positions within the association.
- b) The proposed budget must be presented to the membership at the AGM and approved either at that time or within one month thereafter.
- c) All major changes to the approved budget must be re-submitted for approval by a simple majority vote of members present at a General Meeting or AGM.

7.4 Transparency and Reporting

- a) The Vice President Finance shall maintain accurate and up-to-date records of all financial transactions.
 - b) A financial report, including an income statement and budget comparison, shall be presented twice annually to all general members, in December and August.
 - d) The organization's financial records shall be made available to any member upon written request, with a minimum of 5 business days' notice.
 - e) An audit or financial review may be conducted annually at the AGM, or as required by a majority vote of general members at a General Meeting.
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8. Amendments and Review of Bylaws

8.1 Proposal and Amendment Process

- Any member of IMSA may propose amendments to these bylaws.
 - Proposed amendments must be submitted in writing to the Council at least one week before the meeting at which they will be discussed.
 - Amendments will be reviewed and discussed at a regular or Ad Hoc Council Meeting prior to voting.
 - Amendments will typically be considered at the Annual General Meeting, unless an Ad Hoc Council Meeting is called.

8.2 Ratification Requirements

- To be approved, proposed amendments to the bylaws must receive:
 - A two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) majority vote of general members present at a duly called AGM where quorum is met.
 - The Council must ensure all general members are given reasonable notice of the proposed changes before the vote.

8.3 Annual Review and Updates

- The Council will review the bylaws at least once per academic year to ensure they reflect current practices, values, and the needs of the student body.
 - Revisions arising from this review will follow the process outlined in Articles 8.1 and 8.2.
 - All members may also recommend updates as needed throughout the year.

Amendment History

Amended on March 17, 2026 to adopt the name *Wapiski Mekwan Mamawi Wichitiwan – White Feather Circle of Care* and incorporate revisions informed by Doctors Manitoba.

Amended on August 15, 2026 to adopt new position of VP Internal Jr. and edit to VP Internal Sr.