

Indigenous Initiatives Strategy

Report of the Campus Environment and Cultural Safety Working Group

Endorsed by the President's Advisory Committee on Indigenous Initiatives | January 12, 2021

Background: The University of Guelph's Indigenous Initiatives Strategy

Over the past two decades, the engagement of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, communities, cultures and ways of knowing has grown across campus, creating a need for a more coordinated approach to develop, support and evaluate Indigenous initiatives at the University of Guelph. Responding to this need, the President's Advisory Committee on Indigenous Initiatives (PACII) directed the University to form an Indigenous Initiatives Strategic Task Force tasked with developing an Indigenous Initiatives Strategy made up of a series of recommendations to guide the advancement of indigenization and reconciliation efforts at the University of Guelph (see indigenous.uoguelph.ca). At the heart of the challenge presented by the PACII was the recognition that the responsibility for indigenization and reconciliation at the University of Guelph resides with the whole campus community rather than with First Nations, Inuit and Métis students, staff, faculty and community partners.

The structure for the Task Force was established following a review of educational documents from First Nations, Inuit and Métis organizations and governments, including the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015), and subsequently revised through engagement of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Knowledge Holders, local community members, students, staff and faculty. The result was the establishment of five Working Groups focused on the themes of *governance*, *Indigenous student support*, *pedagogy and curriculum*, *research and scholarship*, and *campus environment and cultural safety*, supported by an Advisory Circle composed of Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Holders who are engaged at the community level. Each Working Group established their own terms of reference, meeting schedule and membership, which included students, staff, faculty and local community members (Appendix 1). When local representation was not available, Working Groups reach out to provincial and national organizations for information and support.

To facilitate their work, the Working Groups were supported by Graduate Research Assistants, who: examined past and current initiatives at the University of Guelph; compiled peer-reviewed scholarship on the subject of decolonization in the academy; and conducted environmental scans of policies and practices at other post-secondary institutions, organizations, and municipal or provincial governments across Ontario, Canada and internationally. When additional information was needed, direct contact was made by email or phone with subject

matter specialists, individuals engaged directly with the initiatives, and members of the Advisory Circle. The goal of these reviews was to help the Working Groups discover exemplary practices that could inform recommendations for the University of Guelph.

With this background material in hand, the Working Groups discussed and debated options for moving forward with indigenization and reconciliation at the University of Guelph, be it around indigenizing convocation, refining curriculum, or improving our collective research practices with First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners. The results of these discussions, including a series of concrete recommendations, have been captured in five stand-alone reports for presentation to the PACII. **This report presents the recommendations of the Campus Environment and Cultural Safety Working Group.** In addition to outlining the recommendations, organized within thematic areas and categorized as ‘short-, medium- and long-term’, the reports offer context to each thematic area, including the related work that has been done to date at the University of Guelph. Before turning to this, and following this common background section, each report presents a unique introduction to their Working Group focus as conceived by the members of the Working Group and thought to be important for preparing readers for the recommendations that follow.

Introduction: Campus Environment and Cultural Safety

For scholars such as Pidgeon (2008), the ongoing privileging of Western cultures and knowledge systems by post-secondary education systems in Canada represents a form of colonialism. More narrowly, Smith and Varghese (2016) note that, when Indigenous¹ students do not see their cultures and knowledge systems reflected in their campus environment, this absence becomes a barrier to them accessing and attaining a post-secondary education. The Campus Environment and Cultural Safety Working Group focused our attention on increasing the role and visibility of First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures, knowledges, and ways of knowing, being and doing in the campus environment, and on strategies for increasing cultural safety for Indigenous peoples on campus.

It is the responsibility of post-secondary institutions to create a culturally safe and responsive learning and campus environment that allows Indigenous students to wholistically² achieve success (Smith and Varghese 2016; Pidgeon and Rogerson 2017). In other words, for post-secondary institutions must begin to indigenize, they must begin to and incorporate practices, policies, and services that consider the emotional, spiritual, physical and intellectual requirements of Indigenous students, staff, and faculty (Pidgeon and Rogerson 2017). It is important to acknowledge that First Nations, Inuit and Métis worldviews are relational and, as such, indigenizing post-secondary education requires an understanding that Indigenous ways of knowing are grounded in interrelationships between people, places, language, land, and

¹ Used as the collective phrase to refer to First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

² When spelled with a ‘w’, wholistic recognizes that we must be mindful of the whole being (Parent 1995).

animals, where no one relationship is more significant or important than another (Kovach 2009; Starblanket and Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark 2018). It is important to cultivate these close ties to the land and environment to maintain the health and well-being of Indigenous students, staff, and faculty on campus (McGregor 2016). These relationships can be cultivated in several ways that respect a wholistic Indigenous perspective and provide Indigenous peoples with the support to successfully navigate these traditionally colonial spaces.

The Campus Environment and Cultural Safety Working Group reviewed programs, practices and policies currently in place at the University of Guelph (U of G) that highlight Indigenous presence on campus, support Indigenous peoples' cultural practices within the university space, and provide learning opportunities outside the classroom. Ultimately, our goal was to identify ways the university could accelerate progress towards indigenization and decolonization through recommendations that engage and facilitate forums for learning and reflection within the campus community.

To facilitate this process, the Working Group was supported by a Graduate Research Assistant who prepared materials for the us to review on various topics. This involved reviewing past and current initiatives at the University of Guelph and conducting environmental scans of policies and practices at other post-secondary institutions and other organizations across Ontario and Canada. The goal of the environmental scans was to help us discover practices that could inform recommendations for U of G. The environmental scans included a search of peer reviewed journals to collect any academic literature, a web search to identify practices at post-secondary institutions, and a secondary web search to locate initiatives from outside organizations and municipal or provincial governments. When additional information was needed, direct contact was made by email or phone with subject matter specialists and individuals engaged directly with the initiatives and members of the Advisory Circle. The reviews were disseminated to the Working Group to provide the context and relevance for each theme and to guide the discussion used to formulate the recommendations. All materials from these reviews will be maintained to support any future engagement and development needs required for the implementation of the recommendations.

We acknowledged the importance of examining and incorporating the unique perspectives and cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in this process. This was necessary to ensure that recommendations were not pan-Indigenous but considered the unique needs and views of all Indigenous peoples in the U of G community.

Themes Identified

The Campus Environment and Cultural Safety Working Group reviewed five theme areas including: accommodation for cultural and spiritual practices; acknowledging the land; representation in the physical space; housing; educational and training opportunities; and language. Each of these themes is addressed in turn, with specific recommendations.

Accommodation for cultural and spiritual practices

Indigenous cultures preserve a wholistic worldview that recognizes the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical realms as interrelated (Archibald 2008). While each culture has different content in their wholistic worldview, all cultures seek to maintain balance among animals, people, nature and the spiritual world (Archibald 2008). Cultural practices and spiritual traditions play an essential role in achieving this balance.

Legal protection for Indigenous peoples to freely practice their spiritual traditions, and to be treated equally with dignity, are included in the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People. Historically, however, this was not the case (Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba 1991; Puchala et al. 2010; Turner and Spalding 2018). Colonial laws and regulations, such as the Indian Act, were put in place by the Crown to prohibit cultural, traditional, and ceremonial practices, and residential schools reduced access of First Nations children to traditional teachers and cultural practices and resources (Turner and Spalding 2018). While legal protection is now in place to protect Indigenous peoples' rights to cultural and spiritual practices, the colonial attitudes and policies continue to have lasting and cumulative effects. As a result, post-secondary institutions must play a role in the renewal and revitalization of Indigenous knowledges, languages and practices. For this to occur, post-secondary institutions must become familiar with, and sensitive to, the various cultural protocols of their staff, faculty, and students. Anishnaabe-Kwe scholar, Sheila Cote-Meek (2014), asserts that post-secondary institutions must begin to focus on the whole person in the teaching-learning environment and to acknowledge alternative pedagogies and the spiritual healing practices of Indigenous peoples to address the impact of violence, trauma and colonization in the everyday lives of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples within the academy. Post-secondary institutions must focus on creating spaces where Indigenous peoples can freely express their intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical needs (Cote-Meek 2014). This process must include specific engagement with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and organizations to ensure the university can meet the wholistic cultural needs of all Indigenous students, faculty and staff. The benefits of accommodating cultural and spiritual practices in post-secondary institutions are two-fold. First, it shows the university's commitment to decolonization by supporting the resurgence of Indigenous traditions that are founded in land-based knowledge. Second, it forces the academy to confront its colonial structure and decentralize Western traditions and power (Gaudry and Lorenz 2018).

Currently, there are no dedicated Indigenous ceremonial sites on campus. To date, ceremonies including smudging, pipe ceremonies and the lighting of the qulliq have been accommodated as best as possible in campus buildings or outdoor spaces. The Indigenous Student Centre (ISC) is a dedicated smudge-ready³ space where all students, staff and faculty have access to cultural medicines and smudging. Smudging in other locations is accommodated on an ad hoc basis,

³ A location where smudging may take place without any prior notice or modification of the physical space (e.g. fire suppression system).

however the practice of smudging and the process for accommodation are not broadly understood. With increasing requests for smudging from internal and external campus partners, a smudging procedure was developed in 2015 to help standardize the process for requests and to account for any environmental limitations. In May 2019, the Guelph campus became a smoke-free environment. Provisions were made to allow for Indigenous cultural and spiritual practices, including smudging, through an exemption in the Tobacco- and Smoke-Free Policy:

5.1.1 In keeping with the exceptions in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, Smoking, burning or use of Traditional Medicines, including Tobacco Products, by an Indigenous person or persons accompanied by an Indigenous person for Indigenous spiritual or cultural purposes is permitted on Guelph Campus. Smoking and burning of Traditional Medicines is done in accordance with the University's Smudging Procedure.

Adoption of a smoke-free campus has increased the need for education about smudging and the use of the practice on campus. The ISC and the Special Advisor to the Provost on Indigenous Initiatives have continued to act as a resource for those wishing to learn more.

Sacred Fires have been held on campus twice for short periods for special events. In lieu of a ceremonial space on campus, students, staff and faculty routinely utilize shared fire spaces within the local community to gather and hold ceremonies. Travel and access to facilities at these off-campus locations limit participation by many students, staff and faculty. Discussions are underway to explore the establishment of a ceremonial site in the Arboretum.

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends the following:

Short-term

- Associate the Smudging Procedure with an Indigenous Ceremonial Policy that includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultural practices and increase awareness of these policies and practices.
- Establish 4-5 smudge-friendly⁴ spaces of various sizes for meetings, classes, events, conferences and residence located across campus.
- Develop a Sacred Fire location on campus and a Sacred Fire Procedure.

Medium-term

- Update campus design standards to include considerations of the air handling system requirements to allow for smudging.
- Explore the development of ceremonial space on campus.

⁴ A location where smudging may take place with limited notice to allow for the modification of the physical space.

Long-term

- Establish smudge-ready locations of various sizes for meetings, classes, events, conferences and residence located across campus.

Acknowledging the Land

An essential element of many Indigenous philosophies is the responsibility and relationship to land and territory, which is regarded as sacred and vital to identity and culture (McGregor 2016; Green 2017). As such, it is a common cultural and political practice among Indigenous nations and peoples to show appreciation and recognition of the clan, language, and nation of others (Wilkes et al. 2017). Indigenous peoples have advocated, through engaging in resistance, lobbying, and legal challenges, for recognition of the lands and resources from which they have been dispossessed throughout Canada; this has led to the practice of acknowledging and recognizing Indigenous lands by municipalities, provinces, and institutions (McGregor 2016; Wilkes et al. 2017). Through acknowledging the land, institutions recognize the treaty and colonial relationships between the Canadian state and Indigenous peoples (Wilkes et al. 2017) and begin to address Indigenous peoples' experiences of dispossession from their lands to this day (McGregor 2016). Nevertheless, there are several factors that must be kept in mind when making a land acknowledgement including its purpose, its delivery, where it occurs, and what actions can occur in addition to a land acknowledgement (apihtawikosisân 2016). Focusing on these factors when engaging in land acknowledgements will help to ensure that universities are approaching reconciliation respectfully (Wilkes et al. 2017).

In addition to acknowledging the land, it is also important to acknowledge treaties, political relationships, and local communities (Wilkes et al. 2017). Part of reconciliation involves fulfilling the expectations and commitments made at the time treaties were negotiated (Asch 2018). While some treaties granted the Crown some rights to use the land, Indigenous peoples reserve the power of governance and the right to all resources that were not transferred to the Crown in these agreements (Borrows 2018). As a result, it is important to acknowledge and honour the relationships First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples have with the land and their inherent constitutional and treaty rights on their lands and territories. Additionally, it is important to address and oppose the misconception that the Crown has secured absolute title to the land (Alfred 2009). This supports several Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, which call for the renewal and establishment of treaty relationships as well as education on, and respect for, treaty relationships (TRC 2015).

The University of Guelph acknowledges that it resides on the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit (Between the Lakes – Treaty 3). We recognize the storied histories and active stewardship of many nations on these lands including the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Attawandaron and Wendat peoples, and that this gathering place is now home to many First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

In 2011, the University of Guelph's Aboriginal Advisory Council worked with local Knowledge Holders to draft a land acknowledgement that could be used for institutional events. Since this time, the institutional practice of acknowledging Indigenous lands has seen numerous advancements and the understanding of the history of the land has been expanded. Today, individuals, departments and organizations are encouraged to take responsibility for this practice and to be reflective in their preparation and delivery to ensure that the practice is meaningful and aligns with institutional commitments. Increased interest in learning more about the practice of acknowledging the land has led to the establishment of a web resource and the regular offering of a workshop entitled *Acknowledging Indigenous Lands*. The land is now acknowledged on the University of Guelph website, at many campus events and increasingly in institutional documents. Proactively, faculty have chosen to include land acknowledgements on their course syllabi and in the classroom. Permanently installed land acknowledgements are on display at the Guelph Gryphons Athletics Centre, the Football Pavilion and in Student Experience on the third floor of the University Centre.

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends the following:

Short-term

- Develop resources to support the incorporation of land acknowledgements across various needs and mediums.
- Develop a land acknowledgement that may be added to email signatures.
- Make land acknowledgements a requirement for major campus events.
- Explore the establishment of a process for honoring the land during ground-turning ceremonies.

Medium-term

- Incorporate land acknowledgements into physical spaces across campus.

Representation in the Physical Space

The TRC report expressed the important effect that artwork and physical representation can have on healing (Dewar 2016). As a result of the TRC, there was an outpouring of Indigenous writing and other forms of art. Increasing First Nations, Inuit and Métis representation in the physical spaces of post-secondary institutions will not only lead to increased Indigenous visibility on campus, but also provide Indigenous peoples with the opportunity to create and engage with the healing aspect of art and reconciliation. This will also allow Indigenous peoples within and outside the U of G community to commemorate and memorialize their cultural beliefs, experiences, traditions, and worldviews (Dewar 2016). Indigenous representations in physical spaces can also help to demonstrate U of G's commitment to developing a consciousness of the ongoing impacts of colonization and its commitment to a paradigm shift

where Indigenous and other knowledge systems are acknowledged, respected and shared. These representations will serve as a physical reminder of the stories and experiences of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples for all members of the university community who are willing to learn (Dewar 2016).

The above echoes and supports TRC Call to Action number 83 (2015), which calls for “Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to undertake collaborative projects and produce works that contribute to the reconciliation process (p.9).” By incorporating these physical representations into campus tours, viewers will also be able to understand the stories and messages behind each piece (Dewar 2016). Indigenous peoples will also be able to see their personal identity reflected across campus, which can serve to decolonize the space.

The environment also plays a significant role in the spirituality, knowledge, culture, history and relationships of Indigenous peoples (McGregor 2016). Many Indigenous peoples have a close connection to the land and water and rely on it for food and medicines. Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples begins with reconciliation with the land and environment (Borrows 2018). To show respect for the relationship that First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples have with the environment, post-secondary institutions must also open spaces for Indigenous peoples to cultivate this relationship through gardens, land-based teaching spaces and ceremonial sites.

At present, Indigenous culture is represented across the campus, though little is known of these works and their significance. Works include:

- a Modified Covenant Chain Wampum Belt gifted by Six Nations Polytechnic | Executive Suite, University Centre room 424;
- *Skén:nen kénhak né ohwentsá:ke* (Kanien’kéha language) | Peace Pole;
- Indigenous student murals | South Residence Lounge;
- First Nations paintings, photography and sculpture, a Métis painting and an Inuit wall hanging and sculpture | Indigenous Student Centre; and
- a Welcome in First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages | Courtyard outside Creelman Hall.

In addition, the Art Gallery of Guelph houses a collection of Indigenous paintings, prints, sculptures and beadwork including the land-based works, Circle Mound and Colony, in the Donald Forster Sculpture Park.

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends the following:

Short-term

- Incorporate Indigenous content into campus tours and the historical walking tour of the University of Guelph.

Medium-term

- Explore the establishment of a permanent option for raising First Nations, Inuit and Métis flags.
- Develop a resource to highlight Indigenous art and language on campus.
- Review Indigenous gardens on campus and establish a plan for further development, renewal and maintenance.
- Plan for the future development of a culturally-responsive Indigenous Student Centre.

Long-term

- Incorporate First Nations, Inuit and Métis visibility in various forms in buildings across campus.

Housing

Student housing aims to address and accommodate the unique needs of all university students. With the growing number of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students attending post-secondary institutions, universities must begin to design housing, policies, and practices that are reflective of the unique needs of these students (Pidgeon and Rogerson 2017). Living environments, land and place are crucial to the success of Indigenous students to complete a post-secondary degree (Pidgeon and Rogerson 2017; Singson et al. 2016). Student housing not only offers students accommodations, but also provides students with personal and academic support, programs and services that improve student well-being and fosters a sense of community and interconnectedness with other students (Pidgeon and Rogerson 2017). Campus indigenization must involve adapting student housing programs, policies and practices to support the wholistic emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual needs of Indigenous students. Ensuring that student housing on- and off-campus meets the needs of Indigenous students can also increase the retention rate of First Nations, Inuit and Métis students, as social and cultural isolation can negatively influence a student's university experience (Pidgeon and Rogerson 2017; Singson et al. 2016). Social and cultural isolation is particularly hard for students who must relocate from rural and remote communities to attend university. As such, student housing must also provide ways to connect Indigenous students with broader First Nations, Inuit, and Métis organizations within Guelph and surrounding areas.

Several factors must be kept in mind when determining whether to incorporate specific housing for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students or an *Indigenous living learning community* in student housing. The living environment must accommodate the spiritual and cultural needs of Indigenous students and provide space for cultural ceremonies and gatherings. As a result, it may be necessary to create new accommodations or renovate existing spaces to allow for these cultural spaces, such as ceremonial spaces, community kitchens, gardens. These spaces would benefit not only Indigenous students but also provide learning opportunities for all students (Pidgeon and Rogerson 2017). Second, it is important to create flexible policies regarding eligibility, room assignments, move-in and move-out dates, and payment due dates (Pidgeon

and Rogerson 2017). Third, it is important to wholistically support the needs of Indigenous students through the hiring of First Nations, Métis or Inuit staff, and by providing cultural training to all housing staff that emphasises the diversity that exists among Indigenous peoples and making connections with Indigenous services on campus (Pidgeon and Rogerson 2017).

On behalf of ISC, each fall, Student Housing Services (SHS) distributes a welcome gift to all self-identified First Nations, Inuit and Métis first year undergraduate students living in residence. In addition, as part of START Indigenous, First Nations, Inuit and Métis students can move into residence two days prior to the fall move-in day without any additional cost. This provides an opportunity for Indigenous students to get settled while the campus is quieter and allows them to meet other Indigenous students who will be living on- and off-campus. In support of Indigenous students living in residence, ISC and SHS maintain an active working relationship and ISC provides educational opportunities for SHS staff on request.

The University of Guelph has not previously had an Indigenous Living Learning Community or specific housing for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students. *Indigenous House* plans were developed for fall 2020 but they were delayed by the COVID pandemic.

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends the following:

Short-term

- Explore Indigenous-specific housing options in student housing.
- Implement an Indigenous Living Learning Community.
- Establish a point person on the Student Housing Services team to support First Nations, Inuit and Métis student needs in residence.

Educational and training opportunities

Education is vital to address the disparities that Indigenous peoples face, which arose from Canada's colonial history and continue to be perpetuated by contemporary realities. The colonial nature of post-secondary institutions contributes to the erasure and marginalization of Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous perspectives (Gaudry and Lorenz 2018). Staff, faculty, and students from all areas of campus have an important role to play in challenging inequities and fostering inclusion. Engaging First Nations, Inuit and Métis knowledge systems plays an important role in decolonization and improving relationships between settler institutions and Indigenous peoples (Simpson 2004). Furthermore, providing more education and training on Indigenous knowledge systems and perspectives will promote the meaningful and respectful co-existence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems within the academy and play an important role in deconstructing colonial processes (Simpson 2004). Micro-aggressions, which occur in many different forms such as intentional or unintentional verbal, behavioural, or environmental mistreatments (Musayett 2018), can negatively affect the well-being of Indigenous staff, faculty and students. However, there are several ways to address

and reduce biases, micro-aggressions and racism through educational and training opportunities. For example, the university needs to create spaces for discussing micro-aggressions, ways to address them, and what to do when witnessing micro-aggressions (Musayett 2018). Offering training and educational opportunities on First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures and knowledge will actively support U of G's commitment to fostering an inclusive campus (2017) and work to address racism and aggressions within the academy. It is important to identify the ways racism and colonial practices affect Indigenous peoples within the academy to educate members of the university community so they can understand the connection between the ongoing impact of colonization and the experiences of Indigenous peoples in colonial spaces (Cote-Meek 2014). This will minimize the risk of re-traumatizing Indigenous learners, staff and faculty inside and outside the classroom. Additionally, by providing educational and training opportunities for the university community, U of G would demonstrate a commitment to challenging the idea that Eurocentric knowledge is neutral (Battiste et al. 2002). These opportunities must focus on centering First Nations, Inuit and Métis practices and values (Hart et al. 2017).

First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and perspectives have often been excluded from anti-racism training, education, and rhetoric, and, as a result, Indigenous peoples do not see their experiences reflected in anti-racism contexts (Lawrence and Dua 2005). This leads to distortions in how individuals understand racism perpetrated against Indigenous peoples and their experiences of colonization. In order to decolonize anti-racism, it is important to provide opportunities to learn about the unique experiences of Indigenous peoples (Lawrence and Dua 2005). As a result, U of G must strive to provide educational and training opportunities for students, staff and faculty grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing to support Indigenous peoples and knowledge systems, and to encourage individuals and organizations to challenge overt and covert acts of systemic oppression and colonial actions, practices, and policies which privilege institutional power and colonial views (Hart et al. 2017).

The Indigenous Student Centre in Student Experience provides workshops as requested. These opportunities are constrained by resources and the availability of staff. Examples of past topics include:

- Introduction to First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples in Canada;
- Historical Context of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples;
- Contemporary Indigenous Affairs;
- Identity Development from an Indigenous Perspective;
- Re-examining Allyship with Indigenous Peoples;
- KAROIS Blanket Exercise;
- Acknowledging Indigenous Lands; and
- Indigenous at Guelph: Serving First Nations, Inuit and Métis Students.

The ISC also delivers a variety of programs aimed at fostering greater understanding of First Nations, Inuit, Métis peoples and cultures. These experiences include Learning and Sharing

Circles facilitated by First Nations, Inuit and Métis Knowledge Holders, Indigenous Recognition Week and cultural gatherings.

To date, there has not been a coordinated, institutional web presence for Indigenous initiatives. Information regarding services and supports for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students and Indigenous programming and educational opportunities has been curated on the Student Experience website at uoguelph.ca/studentexperience or on GryphLife.ca. Departmental initiatives are housed and promoted within their College sites. This has created barriers to finding information about events, programming and services available on campus. A web portal is under development to provide a centralized access point for Indigenous initiatives.

Most recently, the U of G Style Guide has been updated to include a resource on using inclusive and culturally relevant language when communicating about First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and topics. Workshops were facilitated for Communications and Public Affairs and the Campus Communicators to provide relevant information and resources and the Special Advisor on Indigenous Initiatives was established as a central contact to offer support to Campus Communicators.

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends the following:

Short-term

- Establish a partnership between Indigenous initiatives and Diversity and Human Rights to indigenize equity, diversity and inclusivity training and develop Indigenous intercultural training.
- Establish a position dedicated to designing and providing training with a focus on First Nations, Inuit and Métis content.
- Provide ongoing educational opportunities for Campus Communicators on writing about Indigenous topics.

Medium-term

- Develop a strategy to ensure all students have access to and participate in Indigenous intercultural training.

Long-term

- Require all administrators, faculty, staff, student leaders and Peer Helpers to participate in First Nations, Inuit and Métis intercultural training

Indigenous Language

The effects of colonization over generations has impacted the maintenance and transmission of many Indigenous languages and led to their endangerment (Norris 2016). Language loss has a significant impact on First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures and identities because language interweaves the knowledge, history, culture, and way of thinking of a group. While many Indigenous communities have attempted to revitalize their languages, the loss of Indigenous languages is a complex problem influenced by a number of factors including urbanization, socio-economic status, and geographic characteristics. While 28 % of Indigenous languages in Canada are classified as vulnerable but healthy, the remaining 72 % of Indigenous languages are endangered (Norris 2016). As a result, many Indigenous children are not able to speak their Indigenous languages, which impacts their ability to make connections across generations and to form a positive cultural identity.

To date, post-secondary institutions have not played a major role in maintaining and revitalizing Indigenous languages. However, given the role that language revitalization can play in increasing the health and well-being of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and communities, it is imperative that the academy plays a role in language revitalization initiatives (Norris 2016). Participating in language revitalization demonstrates a post-secondary institution's commitment to the educational success and development of Indigenous students, staff and faculty.

In Fall 2019, the School of Languages and Literatures in the College of Arts launched the first Indigenous language course at U of G, INDG*1100 Indigenous Language and Culture. The demand was evident, with the course reaching maximum enrolment after three registration days. The course was added a second time in Winter 2020, again with strong demand.

Many First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples express interest in language revitalization, however additional language acquisition requires a significant commitment that is impractical for many. An alternative concept is the development of language bundles, a personal dictionary of words and phrases that are relevant for an individual's lived experiences. To support the development of word bundles, students, staff and faculty have attended campus walks with an Anishinaabemowin speaker and Elder on campus. Through sharing and storytelling about different locations on campus, the Elder helped the participants form word bundles for them to carry. These opportunities were part of a research project on Indigenous language revitalization. The results of the research are outlined in the report, *We Stand Strong in our Knowledge: Seeking Meaningful Entry Points to Indigenous Language Revitalization at the University of Guelph* (Bergier and Anderson 2020).

In the summer of 2019, the kiosk in the courtyard outside Creelman Hall was renovated to include phrases for hello and welcome in languages from around the world. Indigenous students were surveyed to provide terms in their languages and the following responses were included: binvinu (Michif); pjila'si (Mi'kmaq); tekwanonwerá:tons (Kanien'kéha); biindigen and aaniin (Anishinaabemowin); tansi (Nēhiyawēwin); and tungasugitsi (Inuktitut). Binvinu, aaniin

and tungasugitsi were also highlighted with other languages on light post banners displayed around the University Centre bus loop.

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends the following:

Short-term

- Name Indigenous spaces in First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages as a symbol of their relationship and significance.

Medium-term

- Incorporate First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages in signage on campus.
- Review the *We stand strong in our knowledge: seeking meaningful entry points to Indigenous language revitalization at the University of Guelph* report and establish a plan for fostering Indigenous language revitalization on campus.

Long-term

- Incorporate First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages in building and room naming on campus.

Conclusions

The recommendations made here by the Campus Environment and Cultural Safety Working Group focused on how U of G can uphold ties to the land and environment, and maintain the health and well-being of First Nations, Inuit and Métis students, staff, and faculty on campus. By focusing on accommodation for cultural and spiritual practices, acknowledging the land, representation in the physical space, housing, educational and training opportunities, and language, we were able to prioritize how U of G could work to ensure Indigenous values, traditions, and knowledges are incorporated into the campus environment. We strongly believe that Indigenous engagement and accountability measures are imperative in implementing these recommendations and in fostering a campus environment that is culturally safe (i.e. where First Nations, Inuit and Métis staff, faculty, and students can wholistically thrive and reach their goals).

These recommendations have several important implications for U of G, First Nations, Inuit and Métis staff, faculty, students, and the wider Indigenous community. First, implementing these recommendations will help demonstrate U of G's commitment to responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Second, it shows U of G's willingness to work towards correcting and dismantling colonial power dynamics within the institution. This will play a role in improving the relationship between U of G and Indigenous peoples and creating a space where knowledge can be co-created using Western and Indigenous paradigms. Third, it

will make the University campus more accessible and affirming for First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples who will begin to see their identity reflected across campus. Finally, it will provide enhanced educational opportunities for all staff, faculty, and students on First Nations, Inuit and Métis ways of knowing and how they can problematize and combat colonial practices and spaces on the University campus and within society.

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

Campus Environment and Cultural Safety Working Group Terms of Reference

Purpose

The role of the Aboriginal Initiatives Strategic Task Force is to provide strategic direction and leadership guiding the advancement of reconciliation and decolonization efforts at the University of Guelph. The Campus Environment and Cultural Safety Working Group will provide focused attention and work on the inclusion of Indigenous cultures, knowledge and ways of knowing, being and doing in the campus environment including:

- Inclusion in the physical space
- Visibility
- Land use and maintenance
- Accommodation for cultural and spiritual practice
- Capital Projects
- Communication
- Training opportunities for faculty and staff
- Co-curricular and extra-curricular educational opportunities for students

The Working Group will be committed to the following responsibilities:

- Review past and current campus initiatives, programs and services
- Engage and facilitate forums for learning and reflection with campus, community and relevant partners
- Recommend review and revisions to existing University policies, practices and procedures relating to the Working Group's area of focus
- Identify goals and expected outcomes that will allow the university to accelerate progress towards indigenization and decolonization
- Formulate final recommendations towards the development of the Aboriginal Initiatives Strategy

Term

Completion of the development of the Aboriginal Initiatives Strategy.

Membership

The membership of the Working Group will include students, faculty, staff and community members including Aboriginal individuals. Members will have expertise and experience in a range of areas.

Other University of Guelph staff, faculty or students, as well as Aboriginal community and professionals external to the University, may be added as needed.

Meetings

The Working Group will determine their own schedule but will normally meet once a month.

Roles and Responsibilities

The *Chair* of the Working Group is responsible for:

- Championing and leading the work of the Working Group;
- Serving as the interface between the Steering Committee and the Working Group;
- Calling monthly meetings, approving meeting agendas and chairing the meetings;
- Coordinating additional meetings, as required; and
- Ensuring action and follow-up is taken on initiatives approved by the Steering Committee or Working Group.

The *Members* of the Working Group are responsible for:

- Being champions and change agents to support the move towards an Aboriginal Initiatives Strategy;
- Contributing knowledge, perspective, experience, creativity and subject-matter expertise;
- Being accountable for their contribution and coming to meetings prepared;
- Completing assigned task(s) as planned or making alternate arrangements; and
- Following up on action items between meetings, providing support to advance items, as required.

Decision-making

The Working Group will use a consensus model for decision-making. In the event consensus cannot be achieved, the Chair may invoke a vote through a show of hands. In the event of a tie vote, the Chair shall seek the advice for reconsideration at the next meeting.

Review and Approval of Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference will be finalized by the Working Group and reviewed on an as needed basis.

Membership

- Chelsea Brant, Coordinator, Indigenous Programs, Student Experience
- Wilfred Ferwerda, Project Manager, Physical Resources
- Jenna Hennessy, Manager Internal Communications, Communications and Public Affairs
- Kathryn Hofer, Interim Director, Student Experience
- Pat Kelly, Associate Director, Residence Life
- Indira Naidoo-Harris, Assistant Vice-President (Diversity & Human Rights)
- Dave Skeen, Métis Knowledge Holder
- Quincy Sickles-Jarvis, Undergraduate Alumna
- Cara Wehkamp, Special Advisor to the Provost on Indigenous Initiatives
- Brenda Whiteside, Interim Assistant Vice-President (Diversity & Human Rights) [Former member]

Research Support

- Anna Johnson, Graduate Research Assistant

Meetings

- April 9, 2019: Opening and Terms of Reference
- May 16, 2019: Smudging
- June 24, 2019: Smudging and Areas of Focus
- July 29, 2019: Communications and Land Acknowledgements
- August 29, 2019: Representation in Physical Spaces and Ceremonial Space
- September 26, 2019: Representation in Physical Space
- October 25, 2019: Living Learning Communities
- November 11, 2019: Intercultural training sub-committee meeting
- November 12, 2019: Living Learning Communities sub-committee meeting
- November 21, 2019: Intercultural training
- December 11, 2019: Pow Wow and Finalize Recommendations
- February 21, 2019: Review working group report

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