

**President's Indigenous Reconciliation Task Force Status Report: Accomplishments
Spring 2018 to Spring 2020: *Executive Summary***

university's response to the TRC has grown community knowledge base recognizing the necessity of reconciliation work. Significantly, this desire to "do" allowed us to learn from our successes and failures, and thus, ground our plan in the institutional realities that we have come to know. "Doing" has strengthened our planning.

Indigenous Education and Cultural Services (IECS) staff members, including Jill Thompson, Carol Ducharme, Rick Bourque, and their Director Sarah Rasile, have undertaken much of the reconciliation work at Ontario Tech as part of their overarching mandate to support Indigenous students. This includes their active participation on the Task Force and the IEAC and leadership on the Indigenous Education Management Committee. A university community that is open to learning and enabled to fulfill the TRC Calls to Action will necessarily become more welcoming to and more engaged in the lives of Indigenous students, as well as more able to develop respectful relationships with local Indigenous communities. I have included the work of the IECS in this status report because one of the roles of the Task Force is to support reconciliation work across the university, and IECS staff contribute to reconciliation every day. IECS staff activities engage people across the university, planting the seeds of education and transformation that I hope our plan will build on as it reciprocally supports that work, eventually expanding towards the university as a whole taking on greater responsibility for reconciliatory action.

After explaining what we have accomplished in terms of our own planning work and public education, this status report focuses on what has been accomplished within each priority area.

Team-Building and Planning Work

In order for the Task Force to do their work effectively, we needed to ensure that members had an understanding of residential schools and their ongoing impacts and the role of post-secondary education in reconciliation. The inaugural meeting of the Task Force and IEAC included Kevin Lamoureux, then National Education Lead at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in May 2018. Kevin spoke at an event open to the entire university on "Reconciliation and the Future of Post-Secondary Education" which was inspiring, educational and well-attended. The Task Force and the IEAC then met in facilitated groups identify key priorities for reconciliation activity at the university.

On March 15, 2019, the Task Force and the IEAC visited the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford, Ontario, a former residential school, to deepen our understandings of residential schools and their ongoing impacts, and build our team in responding to this learning through a facilitated debriefing. In early April, 2019 the Task Force held a facilitated planning retreat at Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation (MSIFN) where we worked on articulating our goals and outcomes through the Medicine Wheel model. Our process continues to be iterative, bringing ideas to the IEAC and seeking their input, and re-shaping as we go. This consultation with Indigenous community members and organizational representatives and university community members we hope will be

engaged as a model throughout the work of the Ontario Tech community in responding to the TRC Calls to Action and fulfilling this plan.

Public Education

The TRC's Final Report emphasized education as a way towards building new relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Given the TRC's research and Calls to Action, as well as the research conducted for our initial report, the Task Force knew that it was important to build a foundation of awareness of the past and ongoing harms of residential schools, and recognition of the need for new respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples, within which our plan could become operational.

Such education could only help our university community to develop commitments to reconciliation and interest in learning across the range of tasks and responsibilities staff, faculty and administrative leadership fulfill each day. This led us to deepen our purpose and add the following to our mandate: "The Taskforce understands that fulfilling this purpose requires broader curricular, institutional and social change, as stated in the TRC Calls to Action, and that non-Indigenous people are required to play a significant role in reconciliation. The Taskforce is committed to promoting reconciliation and to building relationships of mutual respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in all of its actions." The Task Force also added the University Librarian to its team, given the library's commitment to providing knowledge resources, to students, faculty and the broader community.

Our public educational ventures began with Kevin Lamoureux's talk on "Reconciliation and the Future of Post-Secondary Education"

assistance from several Task Force members. Several individuals including the communications team from Student Life, the University Librarian and her team, supported the resources page design as well as publicity for this event. I am particularly proud of this event because it is this educational, contextual response to events surrounding such disputes and the inter-community tensions that often arise from lack of understanding that the TRC calls us to act upon, as a post-secondary educational institution.

The Task Force has also co-sponsored university and community educational events. We co-hosted “Creating Connections with Indigenous Perspectives in Education” with the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) and Indigenous Education and Cultural Services (IECS) on March 1, 2019. Bernard Leroux, Dr. Joey-Lynn Wabie, Elder Cat Criger, Mitchell Huguenin, Nancy Hamer Strahl kindly shared their experiences and guidance with us. This event was aimed at faculty and staff involved in teaching and learning, and brought a range of Indigenous perspectives in shaping higher education, and has been recorded. The TLC has also video-recorded an interview with Elder Tony Bomberry. We contributed to the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities (FSSH) Dean’s Public Lecture, wherein Tanya Tagaq, a renowned Inuk throat singer and artist spoke to an audience of five hundred people drawn from the university and wider community on October 30, 2019. The Task Force, along with the IECS, contributed to the Criminology Graduate Students’ Association sponsoring of Elder Tony Bomberry who discussed his healing journey on March 10, 2020. About 50 students attended the event, along with several staff and faculty.

Our public educational events include land acknowledgements (see Appendix 1 for details).

with shared expertise and focus, and each brings forward information and suggestions to the Task Force as a whole for feedback and decision-making.

Priority Area: Indigenous visual and artistic representation on campus

Members of the Task Force and IECS worked together to display Indigenous artifacts with written descriptions in the lobby of the Energy Research Centre. The University Librarian and the IECS worked together to commission and hang a large-scale Dream Catcher in the Fireside Reading Room at the Library (north location). Another Dream Catcher is being made for the Sleightholm room in the Social Science, Humanities and Education Library (downtown location). Two Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC)

goal in supporting and valuing Indigenous students and cultures, this work builds receptivity among non-Indigenous students for Indigenous curricular content.

The inaugural “Brilliant Incubator: Indigenous Start” workshop was held in April 2020. Its purpose is to provide specialized support and mentoring to Indigenous students who are interested in taking part in the Brilliant Incubator entrepreneurship program at Ontario Tech. The workshop is rooted in personal business success stories and Indigenous traditional teachings to help students reflect on and develop a better understanding of the gifts they hold to strengthen a foundation to live their own unique success story. This is a good example of innovation in connecting Indigenous traditional teachings to a particular Ontario Tech program.

Priority Area: Training for Staff and Faculty

In the summer of 2016, staff at IECS began offering “From Contact til Now”, an interactive, experiential workshop that addresses the impacts of colonialism and residential schools, and addresses stereotyping. In 2018, IECS staff developed “Building the Road to Reconciliation”. This series of workshops has been offered frequently to staff and faculty through human resources, in addition to Indigenous cultural learning activities, such as medicine bag workshops, medicine walks and Sweat Lodge Ceremonies. Interest in recent years has been very strong with offerings filling up shortly after they are opened for registration. “From Contact til Now” was provided to Academic Advisors in

student and sharing research contributions. Significantly, it demonstrates the interconnections between Task Force priority areas.

IECS has as usual, participated in the new faculty and Teaching Assistant orientations held in August/September of each year, and provided orientation and tours of the Baagwating Indigenous Student Centre to the Student Accessibility Services team. IECS also hosted a viewing and discussion group around the “First Contact” CBC reality series, and led talking circles at Student Life.

Working Group members organized a Book Club, open to staff and faculty, to read *Indigenous Education* by Tanya Talaga and *Indigenism* by Richard Wagamese, and played a key role in organizing the “Creating Connections with Indigenous Perspectives in Education” event referred to above.

In the fall of 2019, the Task Force offered each faculty \$1250 to bring in workshop leaders and/or consultant to support faculty to effectively introduce Indigenous content to their courses. Faculties are working on this. FESNS and FEAS are supporting an invitation to Deanna Burgart, “Indigeneer” and faculty member at the Shulich School of Engineering at University of Calgary to speak at the university. This was planned for May 2020, however, with COVID-19 closures, this event and planning for other events has been delayed until institutional closures and travel restrictions are lifted.

IECS staff and students, in consultation with MSIFN and the IEAC, revised the Land Acknowledgement for Ontario Tech. The IEAC approved the final version in December 2019. Recently, IECS staff and myself as co-chair of the Task Force developed a proposal to bring in an external facilitator to develop and lead Land Acknowledgment workshops for the Senior Leadership Team, External Relations, and Task Force members. The facilitator will also develop content so that Task Force members willing to do so, may act as facilitators in providing training across the University. The purpose of this training is to ensure that university leaders understand the reasons for and purposes of Land Acknowledgments and are able to conduct them in a respectful and meaningful way. These workshops are expected to be

Indigenous learners at both institutions, and non-Indigenous learners at Ontario Tech. We are reviewing the pilot and will advertise for the next Fellow in the spring of 2020.

IECS staff host a Visiting Elder to visit classrooms, meet with the university community and share their knowledge each year in both fall and winter terms. This program began in 2014. Visiting Elders may reach up to 1000 students, staff and faculty, and community members, during their week-long visit. This number arises from classroom visits, lunch and learns, individual and small group meetings, community events, and Ontario Tech events. This program is well-established and may be one of the most far-reaching activities exposing the Ontario Tech community to Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing.

IECS also organize an Indigenous Speakers Series (discussed above), and the REEL Indigenous Film Series. All events are open to the entire university community. Faculty members encourage students to attend and relate events to their classes – some faculty members incentivize attendance at such events with bonus marks demonstrating the significance of this learning. IECS staff also participate in an annual one

reviews curricular consultation requests. The IEAC expects that requests will increase with the changes embedded in the university's Curriculog process.

The 2019-20 calendar shows six undergraduate courses with the term "Indigenous" in the title, and fourteen undergraduate courses with the terms "Indigenous" or "Aboriginal" in the calendar description. Ontario Tech had one graduate course with the term "Aboriginal" or "Indigenous" in its course description in 2016-2017, and that course remains the only one found in the 2019-2020 calendar.

The increase in these offerings and emphases is typically attributable to program development and individual fasent

Catholic School Board Indigenous Education Circles strengthening our relationship with
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are those most directly associated with student experience and enrolment, followed by curriculum development.

As the Task Force has engaged in its activities and planning, further opportunities for university-wide engagement and addressing gaps in our reconciliation work have been identified in Research, Communications and Marketing, and Advancement.

. The Research Ethics Board (REB) created the Research Ethics Board Indigenous Circle in May 2018 to assess applications for research with human participants that involve Indigenous peoples or communities. Joeann Argue from the Trent University Indigenous Studies program, and Sylvia Coleman, a post-doc in the sustainable built environments performance assessment group at the University of Toronto are the first two members of the Circle.

Currently, several faculty members conduct research in areas such as Indigenous governance and rights; the duty to consult Indigenous peoples and free prior and informed consent; Indigenous language learning; Indigenous social movements; the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in custody; Indigenous health and physical activity; Indigenous peoples, criminalization and victimization and Indigenous law and reconciliation. Other faculty members conduct research in areas relevant to First Nations community concerns such as freshwater fish and contamination. While some faculties have hired faculty members with expertise in Indigenous-centered research areas, there have been no institution-wide efforts to specifically support or engage such research. The 2019-21 Strategic Research Plan has set out a list of principles and commitments that frame research at Ontario Tech, including “

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Appendix A:

Taskforce Members List 2019-2020

Co-Chairs

Rachel Ariss, Associate Professor, FSSH

Art Beaver, Alderville First Nation (til F

