

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

The President's Indigenous Reconciliation Task Force's (Task Force) mandate was to work with the Indigenous Education Advisory Circle (IEAC) to identify strategic priorities, determine measurable objectives and create a three-year plan designed to increase our capacity to recruit, support, retain and graduate Indigenous learners.

In order for the Task Force to do its 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 speaking at an event for the entire university on "Reconciliation and the Future of Post-Secondary Education". The Task Force and the IEAC then met in facilitated groups to identify key priorities for reconciliation activity at the university. These interconnected priority areas are: increasing Indigenous artistic and visual representation; increasing Indigenous student presence; increasing Indigenous faculty and staff presence; providing relevant training to staff and faculty; and curriculum development. Our priority in building partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations infuses all the others. Team building included visiting the Woodland Cultural Centre, a former residential school, and planning at a facilitated day-long meeting at Scugog Island First Nation in spring 2019.

It is important to build awareness of the past and ongoing harms of residential schools, and understanding of the need for new respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples, within which our plan could become operational. Thus, we committed to public education and modified our terms of reference to acknowledge that fulfilling our purpose requires broader curricular, institutional and social change, as stated in the TRC Calls to Action, and that non-Indigenous people play a significant role in reconciliation. Educational events include co-sponsoring speaker Niigaan Sinclair on "Indigenizing the University"; hosting a free showing of the film *Indian Horse* with Elder Tony Bomberry as speaker; sponsoring and organizing a panel of experts on Indigenous pedagogy; organizing and sponsoring MSIFN Chief Kelly LaRocca and Alderville First Nation Chief Dave Mowat to speak on the events at Wet'suwet'en. The Indigenous Education and Cultural Services (IECS) team regularly provide cultural and educational programming and the Task Force recognizes, supports and publicizes IECS events as key to building this foundation of awareness.

The Task Force is made up of "doers" and has made steps forward in each priority area, including: the university hosting two Pow Wows and the library commissioning two large Dreamcatchers for display; improving Indigenous student accessibility to admissions and launching a Self-ID campaign; identifying gaps in human resources necessary to achieve our goals and beginning advertising outreach to prospective Indigenous staff members; developing a Land Acknowledgment workshop proposal adnrepsnding to requests for workshops in tis area (IECS staff); sponsoring an Indigenous Studies Dissertation Completion fellow who teaches Introduction to Indigenous Studies to our students, and developing protocols for consultation, particularly on curriculum (IEAC). We have learned from our "doing" and our experiences will inform our plan.

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

The President's Indigenous Reconciliation Task Force's (the Task Force) mandate was to "review the goals and recommendations" of the university's 2016 report on responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action in its Final Report and, work with the Indigenous Education Advisory Circle (IEAC) to "identify strategic priorities, determine measurable objectives and ultimately create a three-year plan designed to increase our capacity to recruit, support, retain and graduate Indigenous learners." The Task Force began in January 2018, and was designed to work on this project with the IEAC, which is comprised of members representing Indigenous communities and organizations as well as internal university members, including the President as represented by the Provost. The IEAC was established in 2012 to ensure that the university appropriately engages Indigenous people in relevant decision-making. The Task Force and the IEAC are co-chaired by a community member and a university member.

Art Beaver of Alderville First Nation began as the very capable community co-chair of both the Task Force and IEAC. The guidance he provided to us and his creativity in addressing issues, based on his experience in the university system, in Indigenous education in both the post-secondary and First Nation community sectors, was thoughtful and realistic. In particular, Art taught me as co-Chair that consultation with Indigenous community representatives, the IEAC and Indigenous Education and Cultural Services (IECS) staff is central to building respectful relationships. Art taught all of us involved in the Task Force to take the long view, to expect our tasks to take time and much learning, and to be patient without losing sight of our goals. Unfortunately Art became ill during the fall of 2019, and reluctantly resigned as co-chair in February 2020. The Task Force deeply appreciates his presence and work with us.

Art recommended Greer Atkinson as his successor. Greer is an experienced project manager with history of working with Indigenous organizations and First Nations in the Williams Treaty area, and has worked with communities both at urban and First Nation level in development of governance policy, social well-being, human resources, and education in various roles. Her current work with Ogemawahj Tribal Council involves the development of regional language initiatives and the development and promotion of local First Nation curriculum resources for Ontario school boards in the region. Greer Atkinson agreed to our request, and began as community co-chair of the Task Force and IEAC in April 2020. We are all looking forward to working with her very much.

Elder Dorothy Taylor guides the IEAC, and Elder Shirley Williams guides the Task Force. Working with Elders helps us to complete our tasks in a good way, and supports our efforts to build community connections. We deeply appreciate their guidance and willingness to sit with us in this work. Please see Appendix A for a full list of Task Force members.

This status report reflects the fact that most members of the Task Force are as much inclined to "do" as to plan. Our commitment to "doing what we can" at this stage of the

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" to the university as a whole, mentioned above. We invited Niigaan Sinclair, well-known commentator on Indigenous issues and Associate Professor at University of Manitoba to speak on "What Does An Indigenous University Look Like?" in November 2018. University and community members attending learned much from Dr. Sinclair's experiences in 'Indigenizing' universities. The Task Force screened the movie "Indian Horse", followed by a talk with Tony Bomberry, Visiting Elder on Orange Shirt Day, September 30 2019. Elder Bomberry gave a moving talk about ongoing impacts of residential school and community healing, and Elder Shirley Williams spoke of her experiences as well. The 300-person audience made up of university and wider community members was deeply engaged and deeply appreciative of experiences shared that evening.

It is important to note the key roles played by IECS staff supported by Student Life in organizing and participating in such public events: suggesting speakers and resources, inviting speakers, booking caterers, providing guidance on protocol, publicizing, acting as public hosts and providing traditional openings. Recently, the Task Force and IECS worked together to respond to concerns that Indigenous students and university community members had about tensions and racism arising in response to local protests in support of the Wet'suwet'en blockade. IECS staff invited local Chief Kelly LaRocca of Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation and Chief Dave Mowat of Alderville First Nation to speak on the legal and historical contexts of Indigenous land rights, and why people might decide to protest. On-line resources to support learning were selected with

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 acknowledgments, welcome and smudging ceremonies, Elder participation as Elders feel appropriate, traditional foods when possible, and engagement with local Indigenous caterers and business. These practices are modeled by IECS led and sponsored events, including the Indigenous speaker series, Visiting Elder week (discussed below) and opportunities to support Indigenous-centered events that arise through the community. Engaging such practices in Task Force events models respect for local Indigenous protocols and cultures, as well as recognizing and honouring Indigenous presence in the Ontario Tech community.

Throughout, Task Force members have reflected their individual commitments to reconciliation as they promoted and participated in such public educational events to the benefit of our university community and beyond. These individual commitments are key to relationship building and grassroots education. This foundation of common understanding will play a significant role in the success of the implementation of the plan.

### **Working Groups:**

By the end of the summer of 2018, Working Groups were organized to focus on each priority area. All have developed goals, outcomes and actions steps that will contribute to the plan. Working Groups do not work in isolation - each group is made up of people

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) multimedia developers, and a library staff member worked with Rick Bourque, Traditional Knowledge Keeper to produce a video, entitled “Gifts of the Dream Catcher with Rick Bourque” explaining the meaning of the Dream Catcher, directly connecting this artwork to a learning opportunity. The video is in final production stages. Individuals have donated prints by Norval Morrisseau to the Baagwating Indigenous Student Centre, the Fireside Reading Room at the north location Library and the Boardroom at 55 Bond St E. The Working Group is assessing location opportunities for artistic representation; and has begun the work of commissioning murals for the north and south library locations. Recently, Ontario Tech President Steven Murphy announced that the new building at the north location would have an Indigenous name, and Elder Dorothy Taylor and Traditional Knowledge Keeper Rick Bourque have begun the work necessary to find a name in a good way. The necessary protocols for naming the building and the accompanying ceremonies have been expressed and shared with members of the senior leadership team.

IECS runs several regular events such as the Indigenous Speaker Series and the REEL Indigenous Film Series. IECS staff collaborate with the Latham Art Centre (Stouffville) to bring Indigenous artists showing at the gallery to speak at Ontario Tech. The most recent speaker was Jason Baerg, a Metis visual artist, curator and educator who showed slides and video about his work – particularly digital and lasercut engagements with drawing and painting, and his sound work on November 14, 2019. His collaborations with Indigenous artists and communities on art projects are inspirations for community building. Artists speaking as part of the Indigenous Speakers Series over the years include: Jason Baerg, November 2019; Rosalie Favell October 2018; Nadine Saint-Louis January 2018, and Robert Houle, November 2016.

The IECS has expanded its online presence, providing space for publicizing events and resources for the Ontario Tech community on Land Acknowledgments, Hosting an Indigenous Guest and information about the IEAC. The new website design allows space for current and recurring events which is updated regularly by IECS staff with the support of the Student Life communications team. A beautiful new visual identity was designed for the IECS by local artist Luke Swinson of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation (MSIFN), in consultation with the IEAC, MSIFN and the Traditional Knowledge Keeper. It was officially introduced in September 2018. This visual identity appears on print and online IECS materials, and its meaning is explained on the IECS webpage. The

online visibility of Indigenous resources in the Library is increasing with the availability and publicizing of materials such as the “Treaties Playlist” streaming video and the creation of an Indigenous Studies Resource guide.

### **Priority Area: Indigenous student presence on campus**

At the time the Task Force began its work, the Registrar’s Office and IECS were already working on several initiatives towards increasing Indigenous student presence on campus, in line with the 2017-20 and 2020-23 Strategic Mandate Agreement and Academic Plans. Their accomplishments include:

- Operationalizing an Indigenous admissions policy to increase access for students who meet the minimum requirements for admission to their program of choice, but may not have the competitive grade point average required for acceptance (winter 2018)
- Including an Indigenous recruiter position in the Registrar’s Office (position active spring 2017 to winter 2019)
- Re-vamping Indigenous self-identification materials to clarify purposes of and encourage self-identification (summer 2019)
- Including the Land Acknowledgment in recruitment materials, including viewbooks (fall 2018)
- Launching a series of email communications to prospective Indigenous students (fall 2019)

All of these initiatives are now operationalized. The view book now regularly references the Indigenous admissions policy and includes the Land Acknowledgment. Three students were admitted to the university through this policy for the fall of 2018. The Indigenous recruiter position was active for two years, however, it was discontinued due to budget cuts in the winter of 2019.

The university has now also hosted two Pow Wows to celebrate Indigenous presence and raise cultural awareness, in fall 2018 and fall 2019. IECS and Student Life organized the Pow Wows - local Indigenous communities and organizations, as well as school boards were invited. In 2019, CAREA Community Health Centre and Durham College participated as partners. With physical distancing measures expected for Fall 2020, the team will not be hosting the Pow Wow and will be taking the year to review the program and its purpose in relation to their core mandate of supporting Indigenous student success.

The IECS staff offer several cultural events and ceremonies to support Indigenous students and share cultural knowledge with non-Indigenous students at the downtown location at the Baagwating Indigenous Student Centre, and at the north location in the Learning Lab in Student Life and the Fireside Room at the Library. These include traditional cooking demos, beading, Sweat Lodge Ceremonies, and medicine bag workshops. The staff also provide regular drop-in days with access to traditional counselling to support Indigenous students at both locations. As well as fulfilling its key

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 March, 2019. Since the fall of 2018, several “From Contact til Now” workshops have been provided for specific faculty teams and administrative units on their request, including the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science (FEAS), Teaching and Learning Centre, Residence, Library, and new staff in Recruitment. IECS staff also developed a presentation on histories and impacts of colonialism, and impacts of residential schools on Indigenous peoples, which was presented to the faculty in the Nursing Program. Participation at these workshops and the public educational events show that the Ontario Tech community is willing to engage with the learning required to support the creation of a community that is welcoming to Indigenous peoples and working with reconciliation in mind.

IECS staff include “KWL” surveys -- what you know, what you want to know and what you learned -- at the beginning and end of their presentations and workshops for staff and in classrooms. IECS staff provided an immersive practicum placement for an FSSH student to participate in “From Contact til Now” and engage in other opportunities for Indigenous-centered learning, and then begin to organize and analyze the data found in the KWLs in relation to the five key areas of learning discussed in the Final Report of the TRC. Working with communications staff in Student Life communications, the group submitted a presentation proposal ‘There’s Always More to the Story’ – Learning from the Assessment of an Indigenous training Workshop” which has been accepted to the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CAUCUSS) conference for June, 2021. This creative approach includes eventually bringing the data towards future workshop planning, providing an in-depth practicum experience for a



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 *Seven Fallen Feathers* by Tanya Talaga and *One Native Life* 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 begin in the fall of 2020.

### **Priority Area: Increasing Indigenous staff and faculty presence on campus**

One of the central tasks of this Working Group was their identification of the human resource/capacity gaps in research, teaching and administration – which, when budgeted for and filled, will notably strengthen and expand the university’s ability to respond to the TRC Calls to Action. Understanding these gaps, investigating how priorities may be shifted so that some might be filled internally, and assessing our priorities and capacity for new positions, is key to understanding our capabilities to respond to the Calls to Action, and the extent of our commitments to do so. Task Force members in Human Resources consulted with Joanne Smoke, Administrator and Dayna Runciman, Employment Development and Training Coordinator of Alderville First Nation on developing effective outreach to Indigenous people as potential university employees.

The Working Group is currently seeking a consultant to develop an Indigenous employee recruitment plan.

The Indigenous Studies Dissertation Completion Fellowship (discussed below) will continue to bring one Indigenous instructor experienced in teaching Indigenous Studies to Ontario Tech teaching 2 courses per year.

**Priority Area: Inclusion of Indigenous content, perspectives and ways of knowing across curricula**

The Indigenous Studies Dissertation Completion Fellowship was established in June 2018 as a partnership between Ontario Tech’s Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities and the Chanie Wenjack School of Indigenous Studies at Trent University. The Fellowship provides PhD candidates from Trent’s Indigenous Studies PhD Program with teaching experience and financial support while completing the writing stage of their dissertation, while meeting Ontario Tech’s need for instructors with a strong foundation in Indigenous Knowledge, Indigenous pedagogy and community connections to teach our new Introduction to Indigenous Studies course (INDG 2000). The Fellowship stipend is \$22,000 per year for two years, including one guaranteed sessional teaching position for INDG 2000, in addition to the opportunity to apply to teach a second course. Funding has been provided by the Task Force (\$14,800 per year) and the FSSH (sessional pay). The FSSH has committed to funding a minimum of one sessional course per year – however, the Faculty has managed to provide two courses in 2018-2019, and three in 2019-2020 as a reflection of their commitment to bring this educational opportunity to students at both north and downtown locations.

The Fellow is expected to complete their dissertation during the second year and to begin independent research, and submit a publication and attend a relevant conference by the end of the second year. Mentoring in teaching and publishing is provided. This is an excellent model for Faculties to begin contributing to the presence of Indigenous instructors on campus, while supporting Indigenous doctoral candidates in completing their degrees. The inaugural Fellow, Nancy Stevens, began in August of 2018, engaging with our students through teaching INDG 2000 in the fall 2018, spring 2019, fall 2019 and winter 2020 terms. She will also teach in summer 2020. Nancy successfully defended her thesis, entitled “Reconnecting the Heart and Spirit: Making Meaning of Traditional Healing Experiences with Anishinabek Individuals in Dealing with Trauma” on February 28, 2020.

The Indigenous Studies Dissertation Completion Fellowship demonstrates the interconnectivity of the Task Force goals, and the importance of creative thinking in our responses to the Calls to Action. Through the Fellowship we have made steps towards fulfilling several of our goals: an experienced instructor who brings Indigenous ways of knowing and pedagogies forward, acts as a role model for Indigenous students, and contributes her insights to Task Force projects. The Fellowship increased student access to Indigenous curricular content and Indigenous presence in instruction at the University, as well as beginning a mutually-beneficial partnership with Trent that supports

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-day joint conference co-hosted each year by the Durham District School Board (DDSB) and the Faculty of Education focused on Indigenous learning for teacher candidates. IECS staff have offered the “From Contact til Now” workshop (see above) within courses at the Faculties of Social Sciences and Humanities and Education, and to work study students. IECS staff also presented on the histories and impacts of colonialism and residential schools on Indigenous peoples (see above) in courses within the Nursing program. These activities create awareness across the university, gaining understanding and support for the University’s reconciliation activities.

The IEAC designed a consultation protocol in the fall of 2018, to inform and guide the Ontario Tech community on why, how and when to consult with the IEAC on Indigenous-centered projects, initiatives and curriculum. This protocol helps ensure that Indigenous community members have a role in decision-making and that the Ontario Tech community builds relationships. This included a description of Indigenous content in curriculum. The protocol was recognized and accepted by Academic Council in April 2019. Task Force members working in the Centre for Institutional Quality Enhancement (CIQE) ensured that new program and curriculum change templates refer to consultation as a necessary step when including Indigenous curriculum content, as well as providing on-line access to the definitions of Indigenous content (as outlined by the IEAC). These templates are embedded in the university's online Curriculog system, so that when a new program or curriculum change is identified as including Indigenous content, those responsible for the curriculum approval process are alerted in order to ensure that appropriate consultation with the IEAC occurs. Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (Quality Council) reviewed the revised Institutional Quality Assurance Policy (IQAP) in February 2020, and they noted that: “The Council also acknowledged the many references to the protocols associated with the consultation/development of Indigenous curriculum procedures which were woven throughout the policy as an innovative practice.” The IEAC has set up a specific curriculum consultation committee, including the volunteer support of Nancy Hamer Strahl which currently receives and

reviews curricular consultation requests. The IEAC expects that requests will increase with the changes embedded in the university's Curriculum 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 faculty members' knowledge and interests, as they lead course development and content. One of the two new courses, INDG 2000 Introduction to Indigenous Studies, was developed through community collaboration with a teaching innovation grant, and was first offered in the fall of 2018, as well as the spring 2019 and fall 2019 terms. In the winter 2020 term, INDG 2000 is offered on the north location in order to broaden its reach. It is taught as part of the Indigenous Studies Dissertation Fellowship (see above). Two new courses HLSC 3823 Health and Indigenous Peoples in Canada and HLSC 3482U Physical Activity and Indigenous Peoples in Canada, were developed by a new faculty member reflecting her research interests and program priorities. Health and Indigenous Peoples in Canada was developed in the fall of 2018 and has been taught once. Physical Activity and Indigenous Peoples was developed in the fall of 2017, and as of 2020-21 is cross-listed as a required course within the Kinesiology major KINE 2010U while being offered as an elective in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

The Legal Studies Program in the FSSH has been offering the elective LGLS 3310 Indigenous Peoples, Law and the Canadian State yearly since 2015-16 in response to the TRC Calls to Action in order to ensure that as many students as are interested are able to include it in their studies.

Last year, a private donor approached Advancement wishing to contribute to Indigenous programming at Ontario Tech. The donor has provided full funding for fifty students for a day-visit to the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford, Ontario (described above). This is a unique opportunity for students to learn about residential school histories and experiences by visiting a museum located in a former residential school and engaging with a Residential School Survivor. The visit is currently scheduled for September 18, 2020, however, the schedule or student numbers may have to be in response to COVID-19 public health-related measures.

### **Priority area: Building relationships, partnerships, and protocols with local Indigenous communities**

Building relationships is key to our work – and it infuses every priority area. Some examples – such as the 2019 Pow Wow, the Indigenous Studies Dissertation Completion fellowship and the Faculty of Education-DDSB conference – are explained above. The IECS staff ensure that their educational events are promoted to community groups and welcoming to community members. IECS staff participate on the DDSB and the Durham

Catholic School Board Indigenous Education Circles strengthening our relationship with educational institutions in the community. IECS staff collaborated with staff at the First Peoples Indigenous Centre at Durham College for a week of ReDRESS events commemorating Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women. The IECS staff are increasingly asked to run their workshops, especially “From Contact til Now” for community partners, such as Ontario Power Generation, the Whitby Rotary Club and the City of Oshawa. IECS staff conducted ceremonies and shared teachings at the UN Youth Symposium and the Durham Catholic District School Board Youth Summit. Engagement at these community events is an excellent activity for Ontario Tech to support, as it reflects our role as a public institution in supporting community engagement with the learning that support reconciliatory processes. However, its sustainability will have to be assessed.

A significant internal partnership has been built with the Library. The Library supports and provides opportunities for artistic and visual representation as described above, and works with IECS to engage students through hosting, for example, Reconciliation Trees, where students can write their commitments to reconciliation on a leaf-shaped paper and pin it on the tree. The Library also sponsors cultural workshops with the Traditional Knowledge Keeper to faculty, staff and students. The Library has been foregrounding access to resources and knowledge as called for in the Final Report of the TRC – examples are its “Treaties Playlist” and subject guides on various aspects of Indigenous Studies.

Student Life has been a very important collaborator over the last two years. Through active participation in Student Life retreats and the engagement of the team in learning and development opportunities, Student Life teams have worked with IECS staff to infuse Indigenous content into a number of programs and events including: First-Year Orientation, the Long Night/Day against Procrastination, The First Nations Hockey Drive, the Student Learning Centre common reading program and the development of Reconciliation trees. In 2020, Ambassador training will be expanded to include Indigenous content and the requirement of all Ambassadors to participate in an Indigenous focused learning and development opportunity either on campus or in the community. Through the education efforts of IECS staff and the participation of the Traditional Knowledge Keeper, Indigenous pedagogy such as Talking Circles have also been incorporated into some programs and workshops.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

The Task Force was designed to include representation from the Registrar’s Office (Enrolment Management), Student Life, Teaching and Learning, Quality Enhancement, Human Resources, The President’s Equity Task Force, IECS Staff, Indigenous students and Mississaugas of Scugog Island Education Director. As mentioned above, we expanded to include the University Librarian in the fall of 2018, and in the fall of 2019 added two faculty members. We have strong IECS participation and Indigenous student and community representation. The administrative units represented on the Task Force

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.

*Research.* 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. Others do 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 “*We believe that our research should respect and advance Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.*” There are many opportunities to support research resonating with this commitment, including establishing research connections with local Indigenous Nations and organizations. Research staff could develop knowledge in the range of Indigenous-centered research funding opportunities existing at the Tri-Council level and elsewhere, and build connections with the IEAC, the Indigenous Circle at the REB, and the Indigenous Cultural Advisor in order to appropriately direct faculty towards these resources.

*Communications and Marketing.* The reach of the internal Task Force-sponsored events, and knowledge of the results of our work on reconciliatory education and Indigenous student access and support externally, could be enhanced by the participation of and/or a designated, active liaison with Communications and Marketing. This connection will lead to a deeper understanding of the TRC’s Calls to Action and the university’s efforts to respond, and will help tell the story of Ontario Tech’s developing strengths in reconciliation and Indigenousization. The Task Force is willing to work with Communications and Marketing, as the outward face of the university, in finding ways to appropriately include Indigenous content in their work in an effort to support the institutions commitment to increasing the number of Indigenous students, staff and faculty and the university’s growing capabilities to engage in partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations.

*Advancement.* Some philanthropic foundations include bursaries and scholarships for Indigenous youth and research funding for Indigenous community-research partnerships.

The successful Indigenous Studies Dissertation Completion Fellowship may be an attractive Fellowship to certain donors. The securing of the donation for the student visit to the Woodland Cultural Centre (above) was successful in part because of a particular staff member's knowledge of the role of IECS staff. Liaising regularly with Advancement to increase their understanding of the work of the IECS and the Task Force will enable them to speak to prospective donors about the reconciliatory efforts underway and planned to help identify opportunities for them to contribute.

## **Next Steps**

Members of the Reconciliation Task Force have worked with great dedication on providing opportunities for staff, faculty and students to gain understanding of the ongoing impacts of colonialism and residential schools on Indigenous peoples, and the meaning and purpose of reconciliatory work in the post-secondary environment. Task Force members have reached beyond the requirements of their job descriptions to support this work, making personal contributions and modeling the work of reconciliation for their colleagues. This “doing” has shaped our planning -- helping us to understand the possible while remaining committed to responding fully to the TRC Calls to Action.

*Task Force members invite the university community to reach out to any of us to discuss how to contribute towards reconciliation at Ontario Tech.* The increase in understanding, and the grassroots efforts described above have been very significant in launching the work of the Task Force. Such understanding and effort are key in becoming an institution where Indigenous students, staff and faculty feel that they are welcome and their contributions are valued. We will continue building on a great beginning when we present our plan.

## **Acknowledgments**

The university benefits immensely from its relationship with Indigenous IECS staff and their outstanding dedication to sharing their knowledge and perspectives in a largely non-Indigenous context. This work requires intellectual engagement, physical energy and time, emotional resilience and a commitment of hope that minds and hearts might open and change. Chi-Miigwetch to Jill Thompson, Carol Ducharme and Rick Bourque for all they share with the Ontario Tech community.

Thank you very much to Carol Ducharme, Sarah Rasile and Jill Thompson who provided key information, thoughtful suggestions and careful review of this report, and to Shannon Bracken, Susan Forbes, Beth Partlow and Alena Shah for their helpful reviews of sections of this report, and to Anita Krupa for her capable assistance. Any errors or omissions remain mine.

Rachel Ariss, co-chair,  
President's Indigenous Reconciliation Task Force,  
May 6, 2020.

## **Appendix A:**

### **Taskforce Members List 2019-2020**

#### Co-Chairs

Rachel Ariss, Associate Professor, FSSH

Art Beaver, Alderville First Nation (til February 2020)

Greer Atkinson, Education Advisor, Ogemawahj Tribal Council (April 2020)

#### Secretary

Anita Krupa, Executive Assistant, Student Life

#### Elder

Shirley Williams, Elder

#### IECS Staff

Carol Ducharme, Indigenous Programming Specialist

Jill Thompson, Indigenous Cultural Advisor

Rick Bourque, Traditional Knowledge Keeper

Sarah Rasile, Director, Student Success

#### Members

Catherine Davidson, University Librarian

Alena Shah, Academic Planning Officer

Beth Partlow, Director, Human Resources

Krista Hester, Assistant to the Provost, Office of the Provost

Lori Livingston, Provost and VP, Academic

Olivia Petrie, AVP, Student Life

Shannon Bracken, Director, Admissions and Recruitment

Susan Forbes, Manager, Teaching and Learning Centre

Theresa Miedema, Assistant Teaching Professor, FBIT

Thomas McMorrow, Associate Professor, FSSH

Wesley Crichlow, Chair, President's Equity Task Force

Colin Maracle, Student member

Mary-Anne Hoggarth, Community Member



## **Taskforce Members List 2018-2019**

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Shirley Williams, Elder

### IECS Staff

Carol Ducharme, Indigenous Programming Specialist  
Jill Thompson, Indigenous Cultural Advisor  
Rick Bourque, Traditional Knowledge Keeper  
Sarah Rasile, Director, Student Success

### Members

Catherine Davidson, University Librarian  
Alena Shah, Quality Enhancement Analyst  
Glenn Harvel, Associate Dean Quality Enhancement  
Beth Partlow, Director, Human Resources  
Krista Hester, Assistant to the Provost, Office of the Provost  
Lori Livingston, Provost and VP, Academic  
Olivia Petrie, AVP, Student Life  
Shannon Bracken, Director, Admissions and Recruitment  
Susan Forbes, Manager, Teaching and Learning Centre (February 2019)  
Rupinder Brar, Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning (til January 2019)  
Wesley Crichlow, Chair, President's Equity Task Force  
Angela Nagy, Student member  
Colin Maracle, Student member  
Chris Grol, Student member (til fall 2018)  
Mary-Anne Hoggarth, Community Member