



**FOR INFORMATION**

**PUBLIC**

**OPEN SESSION**

**TO:** University Affairs Board

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**DATE:** Sept. 20, 2021 for Sept. 27, 2021

**AGENDA ITEM:** 6

**ITEM IDENTIFICATION:**

2019-2020 Indigenous Initiatives Annual Progress Report

**JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:**

At an Entrustment Ceremony on January 13, 2017, Elder Andrew Wesley presented to President Meric Gertler and Vice-President & Provost Cheryl Regehr the Final Report of the Steering Committee for the University of Toronto (U of T) Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (the “TRC Steering Committee”).

This report outlines the ongoing work of the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, whose establishment was a response to one of the 34 Calls to Action set out in the TRC Steering Committee’s Final Report. This report documents the new and ongoing Indigenous initiatives and projects occurring at the University and progress on the Calls to Action between January 2019 and December 2020.

**GOVERNANCE PATH:**

1. University Affairs Board [for Information] (Sept. 27, 2021)

**PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:**

None

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

In section 1 (the foreword from Shannon Simpson, Director of the Office of Indigenous Initiatives), the report acknowledges the profound impact COVID-19 had on all of us recognizing the

disproportionate impact on Indigenous peoples. U of T remained committed to the Calls to Action and we were able to shift our relationship building, hiring processes and program delivery, while maintaining a strong connection to the Elders Circle, all in a virtual world.

Section 2 of the report highlights the University's progress in each of the six categories originally identified in *Answering the Call, Wecheehetowin: Final Report of the Steering Committee for the University of Toronto Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Highlights include several new staff and faculty hires, including an Indigenous Wellness Counsellor, an Indigenous Training Coordinator, Assistant Director, Indigenous Initiatives at UTSC and UTM, a major art installation on the wall of the Great Hall at Hart House, a Tree Planting Ceremony to signify relationship building and a commitment to the Calls to Action, and the appointment of Academic Advisors to the Provost on Indigenous Curriculum and Indigenous Research and Ethics.

In section 3, the report addresses common challenges brought forward by Faculties and departments as well as Indigenous staff, students and faculty. Section 4 summarizes next steps and highlights some of the exciting spaces, both indoor and outdoor, that are currently underway on all three campuses.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

None

**RECOMMENDATION:**

This report is for information.

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**DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:**

- 2019-2020 Indigenous Initiatives Annual Progress Report

2019 ——— 2020



# OFFICE OF INDIGENOUS INITIATIVES

ANNUAL REPORT



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# Foreword

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Shannon Simpson, Director,  
Office of Indigenous  
Initiatives

FROM SHANNON SIMPSON, DIRECTOR,  
OFFICE OF INDIGENOUS INITIATIVES

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**Established in 2017**, the Office of Indigenous Initiatives set out to support the delivery and monitor the progress of the 34 Calls to Action outlined in *Answering the Call: Wecheehetowin: Final Report of the Steering Committee for the University of Toronto Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. While the Office has expanded its mandate and responsibilities, it maintains this focus. Across all three of our campuses, growth, expansion, and learning continue to happen. We are excited to share and celebrate our collective achievements of 2019 and 2020 and evaluate our progress on our ongoing journey of reconciliation and truth.

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## section

# 1

**WE MUST ACKNOWLEDGE** the profound impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic in bringing most of the world to a halt in 2020. The pandemic had a disproportionate impact on Indigenous peoples due to the multiple barriers faced by Indigenous communities. The Indigenous community at UofT leaned on each other to support our students, staff, faculty, and especially our Elders. It was amazing to affirm and

remember how resilient we are as a community and to witness as we pivoted to online and virtual spaces to meet, socialize, and just see each other's faces. It was not ideal for anyone, but it did provide an opportunity for us to connect and reconnect in new ways. Recognizing the joy on the faces of the Elders Circle members as they met virtually provided reassurance that things were going to be all right. →



We have seen significant progress in putting our commitments into action as we worked, learned, researched, and connected over the last two years. We are excited to introduce some of the many new Indigenous staff and faculty hires who will make prospective and current Indigenous students feel they are welcome and belong here. We have also made significant advances in integrating Indigenous curriculum into many U of T courses to help ensure that Indigenous students see themselves here.

We are looking forward to building upon the U of T Calls to Action, using it as a foundation to make positive change. It is our hope we can rejoin one another safely on our campuses to connect with each other soon. So many new projects, buildings, spaces, and initiatives are in progress, making this work meaningful—and making me proud to be a part of Indigenous U of T.

North Borden Building, home of the Centre for Indigenous Studies and the Indigenous Student Services at First Nations House

“

On behalf of the University of Toronto, I extend congratulations on the publication of the 2019-20 Office of Indigenous Initiatives Annual Report, and I thank the dedicated team for their ongoing guidance, commitment, and creativity. Thanks to the excellent leadership of this Office—and the entire Indigenous community at U of T—we are seeing wonderful progress in our ability to support Indigenous students, faculty, and staff, to address Indigenous issues, and to cultivate a rich Indigenous presence on our three campuses.”

**MERIC S. GERTLER**  
PRESIDENT

“The expansion of the Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII) to all three of our campuses has been a crucial development that is allowing the University to make great headway on meeting the Calls to Action of U of T’s TRC Steering Committee. Ensuring that the needs of U of T’s Indigenous communities are supported, and that Indigenous experience and excellence are celebrated across our institution, remains an ongoing priority. I am grateful for the vision and commitment of the OII and its partners to the work of righting past and present-day injustices and building the base for a strong future for Indigenous students, faculty, and staff at the University of Toronto.”

**CHERYL REGEHR**  
VICE-PRESIDENT & PROVOST

“As we continue to work on truth and reconciliation, I wish to acknowledge the remarkable achievements of U of T’s staff, faculty, librarians, and students. They have demonstrated their dedication to building strong communities and partnerships with Indigenous peoples in the most difficult of circumstances. Although there is still much work to be done, U of T remains committed to its role in responding to its 34 Calls to Action and creating an institution that is respectful, reflective, and supportive of Indigenous peoples and knowledges.”

**KELLY HANNAH-MOFFAT**  
VICE-PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES & EQUITY









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section

2

# Institutional Support and Guidance

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**U of T students, staff, librarians, faculty, and Elders** across the three campuses identified 34 Calls to Action in 2017, and this section reports on the progress achieved under its six themes identified by the Steering Committee for the University's Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC).

**ESTABLISHING INSTITUTIONAL** changes that advance the University's journey of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and communities requires the support and accountability of senior leadership. By championing reconciliation, senior leadership can set expectations and affirm the level of institutional commitment to this goal.

#### —Office of Indigenous Initiatives

Under the Vice-President of Human Resources & Equity and the Vice-President & Provost, the mandate of the Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII) is to support and guide the U of T community as it continues to work towards reconciliation. The Office advises on and oversees Indigenous initiatives across the University, conducting regular environmental scans to establish the impact and progress of such initiatives. It also manages the activities of the Council of Indigenous Initiatives. The former Director of Indigenous Student Services at First Nations House, Shannon Simpson, is the new Director of Indigenous Initiatives. The Office has seen success across all three campuses in offering mentorship opportunities, developing curriculum, and establishing protocols

for community-based research involving Indigenous peoples.

#### —Creation of the Indigenous Training Coordinator

Since the establishment of the OII, it has become increasingly apparent that there existed a significant need for in-house Indigenous cultural competency training. Indigenous cultural competency refers to an effort to recognize, comprehend, and appreciate the values, traditions, and belief systems of Indigenous peoples that may be markedly different from one's own. The OII was continually fielding requests from various departments and offices on topics such as the history of Indigenous peoples, land acknowledgments, and reconciliation. Advancing the TRC Steering Committee's recommendations in a meaningful way required building internal U of T capacity. As such, the position of Indigenous Training Coordinator was created and John Crutch (Ojibwe & German-Canadian) was hired in 2019.

The mandate of the Indigenous Training Coordinator is to:

- Design and facilitate tailored training sessions in person and (currently) online for →

John Crutch, Indigenous Training Coordinator, Office of Indigenous Initiatives



the U of T community, including students, staff, librarians, and faculty

- Develop debrief tools for divisions to process learnings
- Customize sessions for senior leadership

OII offers three different trainings to U of T staff, students, librarians, and faculty: *Speaking Our Truths: The Journey Towards Reconciliation (Parts 1 and 2)*; *Reconciliation: Walking the Path of Indigenous Allyship*; and *Reflecting on Land Acknowledgements*. In 2019 and 2020, nearly 2,700 members of the U of T community received the training.

—U of T Elders Circle

Elders embody a living memory of the past, a perspective on the present, and a thoughtful guiding vision towards the future. Elders, Traditional Teachers, and Knowledge Keep-

ers are a vital presence at the University of Toronto, and we encourage the community to engage and grow in connection with them. The teachings and support of the University's Elders are frequently called upon by divisions and academic units, as well as by many Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of our community. The Elders Circle meets regularly with the Director of Indigenous Initiatives. Its members are Eileen Antone, Grafton Antone, Jan Longboat, Lee Maracle, Ernie Sandy, Constance Simmonds, and Andrew Wesley.

—2019 Tree Planting Ceremony

On September 30, 2019, a ceremony planting an eastern white pine in Sir Daniel's Quad at University College on St. George campus symbolized the University's commitment to carrying out the work identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) Calls to Action and U of T's

TRC Steering Committee. Attended by U of T senior leadership, including the President and Vice-Presidents as well as faculty, staff, and students from across the three campuses, the event featured a Thanksgiving address by Skahendowaneh Swamp, a Wolf Clan Faith Keeper of the Mohawk Nation, offering gratitude to all of creation and giving thanks to the Earth.

The eastern white pine signifies Indigenous Knowledge and medicine, and serves as a reminder that relationships between senior leadership and Indigenous U of T require care and cultivation to grow strong. Moving forward, the University intends to build upon this event and respond to U of T's 34 Calls to Action. For more information, please visit <https://www.utoronto.ca/news/putting-down-roots-eastern-white-pine-tree-planted-u-t-name-truth-and-reconciliation>.

"Our goal is to pursue knowledge, and what I'm so happy to get to witness is that the University of Toronto is really acknowledging that the primary base of knowledge in this place is Indigenous."

- Susan Hill, Academic Advisor on Indigenous Curriculum & Education

"As the University of Toronto continues to build on the excellent work of our TRC Steering Committee, it's important that we pause to reflect on our progress, but also to rededicate ourselves to the work, the important work that lies ahead. This tree-planting ceremony affords us a wonderful opportunity to do so, with its very apt symbolism of putting down roots and its promise of future growth."

- Meric S. Gertler, President

### —U of T's Orange Shirt Day – September 30, 2020

Part of the University's work towards truth and reconciliation involves acknowledging the lived experiences of Indigenous

peoples and the intergenerational impacts of residential schools. On September 30, 2020, the University of Toronto as an institution commemorated Orange Shirt Day, a national movement in recognition of the experiences of survivors of residential schools, their families and communities. The Office of Indigenous Initiatives, in partnership with the Division of HR & Equity and Hart House, organized a virtual event that included a keynote address by Dr. Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, Professor in Native Studies at the University of Manitoba, followed by a Q&A session. In the spirit of reconciliation and healing, many U of T employees working on campus and at home wore an orange shirt to acknowledge that every child matters and to show their solidarity with Indigenous peoples. Organizers of U of T's tri-campus programming also invited U of T members to use the Orange Shirt Day icon as their profile photo and use the virtual backdrop on Teams or Zoom calls the week of September 28, 2020.

In 2019, various departments and offices marked Orange Shirt Day with events and programming. Notably, the Office of Student Experience and Wellbeing at the Scarborough campus worked to make the day a campus-wide education event with an educational session, film, and walk around campus to promote awareness.



**Left**  
Skahendowaneh Swamp, Chair of Indigenous Knowledge at the Chanie Wenjack School for Indigenous Studies at Trent University, providing the opening address for 2019 tree planting ceremony

**Below**  
2019 Skule Orange Shirt Day event, Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering

# Indigenous Spaces

**Indigenizing spaces** supports the development of flourishing environments for Indigenous students, staff, librarians, and faculty members. Indigenized spaces serve a symbolic role, signifying that Indigenous peoples are present on this land and present at the University, and that building relationships is an ever-present priority. Throughout 2019 and 2020, U of T built upon this commitment by creating, designating, or establishing new Indigenous spaces on each campus.



—Hart House Centennial Art Commission: Artists Rebecca Belmore (Anishinaabe, Lac Seul First Nation) and Osvaldo Yero (Cuban), UTSG

In a collaborative venture between Hart House and the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, acclaimed artists Rebecca Belmore and Osvaldo Yero received the Hart House Centennial Art Commission. The landmark commission, entitled *Waabidiziiyan doopwinning* (To see oneself at the table), serves as a poignant reminder of the long-overdue act of Indigenous-non-Indigenous reconciliation. Through this dramatically transformative wall sculpture, which finds a permanent home in the Great Hall at Hart House, the artists ask us to consider who was at the table in the past, who is currently at the table, and who is welcome at the table in the future. For more information, please visit <http://artmuseum.utoronto.ca/virtual-spotlight/hart-house-commission-rebecca-belmore-and-osvaldo-yero/>.



—Indigenous Mural, University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC)

In March 2020, UTSC participated in a mural project with Christi Belcourt (Métis artist) and Isaac Murdoch (Anishinaabe Traditional Storyteller and artist). It depicts the story of Nokomis Josephine-ba Mandamin’s fight to protect the Nibi (water), bringing the waters together to the Great Lakes.

UTSC students, staff, and faculty contributed to the 8x25 ft. mural over a five-day period. The project created opportunities to build relationships, engage the UTSC In-digenous community, participate in experiential learning, and showcase Indigenous ways of knowing and doing through the creation of a unique work of art facilitated by Indigenous artists.

—Medicine Garden, Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health (WBIH), St. George campus (UTSG)

In July 2019, the Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health (WBIH) team joined Elder Jacqui Lavalley, community members, and student volunteers to plant a traditional medicine garden in front of the Dalla Lana School of Public Health. Elder Jacqui Lavalley led the ceremony and offered teachings focused on protocols and the importance of traditional medicines. This garden consists of multiple beds and contains the following plants: sage, tobacco, sweet grass, and cedar.

**Left**

Artist Talk with Rebecca Belmore and Osvaldo Yero at Hart House, below their art installation, *Waabidiziyan doopwining* (To see oneself at the table)

**Above**

UTSC Indigenous Mural facilitated by Christi Belcourt & Isaac Murdoch

# Indigenous Faculty and Staff

**Indigenous faculty and staff members** are essential to developing and furthering the University's Indigenous curricula and research as well as fostering a community environment within the institution that is supportive of Indigenous peoples. They provide Indigenous perspectives and contribute academic and cultural support for Indigenous students. U of T's TRC Steering Committee set out Calls to Action aimed at recruiting and retaining Indigenous faculty and staff.





Tee Duke, Assistant  
Director, Indigenous  
Initiatives, UTM



—U of T Office of Indigenous  
Initiatives: Shannon Simpson  
(Anishinaabe), Director; Tee Duke  
(Anishinaabe), Assistant Director, UTM;  
Kelly Crawford (Anishinaabe), Assistant  
Director, UTSC

With a new tri-campus team, the Office of Indigenous Initiatives is building institutional capacity to implement the 34 Calls to Action of *Answering the Call: Wecheehetowin: Final Report of the Steering Committee for the University of Toronto Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* and provide University-wide guidance on Indigenous issues and activities. For more information, please visit <https://indigenous.utoronto.ca/>.

As the new Director of Indigenous Initiatives, Shannon Simpson supports the University in its work towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and communities and builds upon the work done by the previous Director, Indigenous Student Services at First Nations House, and various units and partners from across the university. Simpson, a member of the Mississaugas of Alderville First Nation, leads the operations of the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and works closely with Indigenous faculty members.

In twin roles, Tee Duke, a member of Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation in Treaty →



3 Territory, and Kelly Crawford, a member of M’Chigeeng First Nation, were each appointed to the new positions of Assistant Director of Indigenous Initiatives at the University of Toronto Mississauga and the University of Toronto Scarborough respectively. In these positions, they develop and implement Indigenous initiatives at UTM and UTSC, enhance Indigenous community relationships with

both on-campus and off-campus communities, and manage the Indigenous Centre and Indigenous House respectively.

—**Jonathan Hamilton-Diabo, Assistant Professor (Teaching Stream) and Special Advisor, Victoria University, UTSG**  
Jonathan Hamilton-Diabo (Kahnawà:ke Mohawk Territory) became the June



Callwood Professor in Social Justice at Victoria College and Assistant Professor in Theology at Emmanuel College in 2019. He also serves as Special Advisor to the President of Victoria University on Indigenous issues. Hamilton-Diabo has a longstanding history of leadership in Indigenous education and community-building at the University of Toronto as a staff member, student, and educator. →



**Left**

Kelly Crawford, Assistant Director, Indigenous Initiatives, UTSC

**Below**

Jonathan Hamilton-Diabo, Assistant Professor (Teaching Stream) & Special Advisor, Indigenous Initiatives, Victoria University

**Below**

Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm, Assistant Professor (Teaching Stream), Department of English, UTSC

**Right**

Maria Hupfield, Assistant Professor, Cross-Appointment with Visual Studies and English & Drama, UTM, and Department of Visual Studies, UTSG

**—University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC)**

UTSC has hired new Indigenous faculty and staff members, including Jason Lujan, Lecturer, Department of Arts, Culture & Media; and Randy Lundy, Assistant Professor, Department of English.

**KATERI AKIWENZIE-DAMM, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR (TEACHING STREAM), DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

A member of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation, Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, Akiwenzie-Damm’s teaching and creative work is firmly de-colonial, a practice of cultural resurgence, affirmation, and survivance. Her publications and creative practice encompass poetry, fiction, non-fiction, radio plays, television, libretti, graphic novels, spoken word, and multi arts productions. Akiwenzie-Damm is the founder and publisher of Kegedonce Press, one of four established Indigenous-run publishing houses in Canada. In 2011, she became the first Indigenous poet to serve as Poet Laureate for Owen Sound and North Grey, and the third Indigenous Poet Laureate in Canada.



**—University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM)**

UTM has hired new Indigenous faculty and staff members, including Yvonne P. Sherwood, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology; and Kristen Bos, Assistant Professor, Indigenous Science and Technology Studies, and Co-Director of the Indigenous-led Technoscience Research Unit.

**MARIA HUPFIELD (ANISHINAABE), ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, INDIGENOUS DIGITAL ARTS AND PERFORMANCE; CANADA RESEARCH CHAIR TRANSDISCIPLINARY INDIGENOUS ARTS; CROSS-APPOINTED WITH VISUAL STUDIES / ENGLISH AND DRAMA (UTM), AND DANIELS FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE, LANDSCAPE, AND DESIGN (UTSG); AND LEAD ARTIST OF THE INDIGENOUS CREATION STUDIO (UTM)**

Maria Hupfield is an Assistant Professor cross-appointed in the Departments of Visual Studies and English and Drama at UTM, and the Department of Visual Studies in the Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, St. George campus. She belongs to Wasauksing First Nation, and is UTM’s first Canada Research Chair in Transdisciplinary Indigenous Arts. A globally renowned Indigenous performance artist, she comes to UTM after nearly a decade based in Brooklyn, New York. She returns to her alma mater, where she completed her own studies in Art and Art History at UTM in 1999. Hupfield runs the Indigenous Creation Studio—an on-campus site for makers, imagination, and the production of art.

**—University of Toronto St. George (UTSG)**

UTSG has hired new Indigenous faculty and staff members, including Uahikea Maile, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science; Michelle Daigle, Assistant Professor, Centre for Indigenous Studies →





and Department of Geography & Planning; Heather Dorries, Assistant Professor, Centre for Indigenous Studies and Department of Geography & Planning; Dale Turner, Associate Professor, Centre for Indigenous Studies and Department of Political Science; Kevin White, Assistant Professor, Centre for Indigenous Studies and Department for the Study of Religion; Mikayla Redden, Instruction and Information Services Librarian, D.G. Ivey Library; Jenny Blackbird, Outreach Communications and Programming Coordinator, Hart House; and Michael White, Director, Indigenous Student Services - First Nations House.

**MIKINAAK MIGWANS, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, INDIGENOUS CONTEMPORARY ART; AND CURATOR, ART MUSEUM**

Migwans joined the Faculty of Arts & Science as Assistant Professor of Indigenous Contemporary Art in Canada in the Department of Art History, and as Curator at the Art Museum at the University of Toronto. As an Anishinaabe of Wiik-wemikoong Unceded Territory, Professor Migwans has focused their work on reclaiming Anishinaabe artistic practices and legacies from the archives of colonial institutions. Exploring Anishinaabe art and crafts in museum collections through the lens of critical theory, Professor Migwans addresses questions of object repatriation, culturally sensitive exhibition, and the politics of place-making, particularly in land-based and customary arts.

**FAITH CHAPUT (MÉTIS), INDIGENOUS WELLNESS COUNSELLOR AND COORDINATOR, FIRST NATIONS HOUSE**

The Indigenous Student Services at First Nations House and the Health and Wellness Centre partnered to create a new Indigenous Wellness Coordinator position to expand outreach to the Indigenous

student community. Faith Chaput, a queer Métis woman whose family hails from the Red River/Treaty 1 Territory, took on the role in 2020. Chaput works through an intersectional, body-based, anti-oppressive, sex-positive, trauma-informed lens and offers client-centred care. She anchors her work in the values of self-determination and non-interference.

**Left**  
Mikinaak Migwans,  
Assistant Professor,  
Indigenous Contemporary  
Art; and Curator,  
Art Museum, UTSG



**—In Memoriam: Alex McKay (Anishinaabe), Associate Professor, 1954-2019**

Alex McKay, from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, was a leader in Anishinaabemowin instruction in the Toronto community for many years. He taught the language at the University of Toronto as an Associate Professor, where he oversaw the Anishinaabemowin program, and taught courses in Anishinaabemowin, Indigenous languages, stories, and culture.

# Indigenous Curriculum

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The University of Toronto affirms that **Indigenous thought and philosophies** are equal to other disciplines as sources of knowledge, and prioritizes the integration of Indigenous curriculum into its teaching and research activities.







Dr. Susan Hill, Academic Advisor,  
Indigenous Curriculum and Education;  
Director of the Centre for Indigenous Studies;  
and Associate Professor, Indigenous Studies  
& History

—**Appointment of Academic Advisor on  
Indigenous Curriculum and Education,  
Dr. Susan Hill**

The Office of the Vice-President & Provost appointed Dr. Susan Hill, Director of the Centre for Indigenous Studies, as the new Academic Advisor on Indigenous Curriculum and Education. Professor Hill (Wolf Clan, Mohawk Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River) will advise the Provost on how Indigenous teaching and learning can be improved at the University and will oversee the development of a resource bank to centralize existing Indigenous teaching materials. This position will capitalize on the growing number of faculty who want to expand their curricula and incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their courses. For more information, please visit <https://www.utoronto.ca/news/u-t-names-two-academic-advisers-indigenous-curriculum-research-ethics>.

—**Expanded land-based education with  
Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous  
Health & Hart House, UTSG**

At Hart House Farm, northwest of Toronto in the Caledon Hills, students of the Dalla Lana School of Public Health and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) partook in a unique, hands-on five-day workshop led by instructors, faculty, and Knowledge Keepers. The students learned about traditional medicines and skills and how to communicate with the land. The land-based workshop aimed to broaden understandings that will address the failure of public health institutions and programs to improve Indigenous health. Incorporating land-based learning is Indigenousizing the educational experience and is an important step in teaching Indigenous perspectives to the next generation of public health professionals. In 2020, the construction of multiple lodge teepees expanded this initiative.

—**Reconciliation Reading Circles, Faculty of  
Law, UTSG**

To promote knowledge and understanding of Indigenous peoples, histories, and experiences, all first-year law students were required to select and read a book on an Indigenous topic from a curated reconciliation reading list. The Faculty of Law's Elder-in-Residence, Constance Simmonds; Manager of the Indigenous Initiatives Office, Amanda Carling; and Julia Tousaw of Pro Bono Students Canada led the initiative. In these circles, students learned about ceremony protocols and traditional medicines while they discussed the literature.



# Ethical Conduct and Community Relationships

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**U of T's TRC Steering Committee** recommended investing in education to guide the conduct of ethical research with Indigenous peoples.

Dr. Suzanne Stewart, Academic Advisor, Indigenous Research and Ethics; and Director & Associate Professor of the Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health, Dalla Lana School of Public Health

## —Appointment of Academic Advisor on Indigenous Research and Ethics, Dr. Suzanne Stewart

In Fall 2019, the Vice-President and Provost's Office appointed Dr. Suzanne Stewart (Yellowknives Dene First Nation) as the Academic Advisor on Indigenous Research (AAIR) to support the Division of the Vice-President, Research & Innovation (VPRI). Professor Stewart focuses on issues related to Indigenous research and working with Indigenous communities as well as providing advice to faculty and students interested in conducting collaborative research with Indigenous communities. This position will also assist in developing best practice and guidance documents to ensure that research is respectful of Indigenous communities. For more information, please visit <https://www.utoronto.ca/news/u-t-names-two-academic-advisers-indigenous-curriculum-research-ethics>.

The AAIR started a working group in February 2020 called the OVPRI Indigenous Research Circle, composed of an Elder, an Indigenous Special Projects Officer, and several Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth, students, and community research assistants. The OVPRI Indigenous Research Circle is working to create a community-informed vision for research services, programs, and policy.

## —Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health (WBIIH) awarded the Ontario Network for Environments in Indigenous Health Research (ON NEIHR) by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)

ON NEIHR is a five-year regional mental health research network of over 17 Indigenous researchers and Elders with national and international research that is aimed at ending Indigenous mental health problems with Indigenous knowledges, solutions, and services driven by community partners from across Ontario and around the world. ON NEIHR brings a wealth of training and research opportunities to students and faculty, and supports Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP) training and innovative knowledge translation activities developed and delivered by Indigenous communities. The WBIIH also strives to reach students and community members through monthly webinars, monthly virtual traditional knowledge teachings, and monthly virtual student/Elder Talking Circles. The WBIIH strives to centre its teaching and research endeavours in spirit and culture by engaging in land-based activity at Hart House Farm for its students, staff, and faculty.

# Indigenous Students and Indigenous Co-Curricular Education

**A priority for U of T** is recruiting and supporting Indigenous students, which includes providing support for cultural activities. Such initiatives help Indigenous students feel included, comfortable, and acknowledged while also raising awareness and educating non-Indigenous students.



## —Indigenous Student Services at First Nations House, UTSG

Indigenous Student Services at First Nations House (ISS/FNH) provides culturally relevant services to Indigenous students to support academic success, personal growth, and leadership development. It provides a space on the UTSG campus to learn about Indigenous knowledges and traditional teachings with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Traditional Teachers; attend events; socialize; seek guidance; and access financial and academic supports. In 2020, Michael White took on the role of the Director at ISS/FNH. White (ᑯᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ) is Anishinaabe, of the Bear Clan, and a registered member M’Chigeeng First Nation. For more information, please visit <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/departments/first-nations-house/>.

In 2019, ISS/FNH held multiple activities to celebrate Indigenous Education Week in conjunction with UNESCO’s International Year of Indigenous Languages. The Elders Gathering addressed a variety of topics, including language revitalization, language’s connection to healing and well-being, and decolonizing language. As part of a 30th-Anniversary Lecture Series called “Proclaiming the Roots and Realities of Indigenous-Black Peoples on Turtle Island,” Professor Ciann Wilson of Wilfrid Laurier University led an engaging talk. Other events included the imagineNATIVE Wiki Page Edit-A-Thon, Language Journal Making workshop, Indigenous Language Rights with Khelsilem, Language Revitalization Class, Hip-Hop 101 Café with Drezus, and a Big Drum Social.



Andrew Wesley retired from the role of Elder-in-Residence at ISS/FNH in 2020. Fortunately, he continues to serve the University community on the Council of Indigenous Initiatives and the Elders Circle, and as a guest lecturer. Wesley (Mushkegouk/Omushkego Cree from James Bay) is a recognized Elder at U of T and is well respected on all three campuses and across Ontario.

—2019 and 2020 President’s Award for Outstanding Indigenous Student of the Year

The President’s Award for Outstanding Indigenous Student of the Year recognizes Indigenous students whose accomplishments are not only of high academic achievement but also demonstrate a strong commitment to giving back to their communities. The 2019 award recipients were:

- Andrea Johns (Kanien’kehá:ha/Mohawk, Turtle Clan), recognized for her tireless advocacy for Indigenous language revitalization.
- Tye Fellows (Inuk), honoured for his passion for helping others, and for being on track to become one of Canada’s few Inuit physicians.

The 2020 award recipients were:

- Riley Yesno (Eabametoong First Nation), recognized for her longstanding community advocacy.
- Jessie Stirling (Kwakwaka’wakw woman of the Wei Wai Kum First Nation), honoured for her work as president and →

Left to right: Nicole Wesley, Beth Mally, Taylor Tabobondung, Sandi Wemigwase, Justin Riemens, Diane Hill, U of T students

**Below (left to right)**

Tyee Fellows, Inuk Knowledge Keeper, Naulaq LeDrew, U of T President Meric Gertler, and Andrea Johns. Fellows and Johns received the 2019 President's Award for Outstanding Indigenous Students of the Year

**Bottom right**

Performance of Encounters at the "Edge of the Woods" at Hart House

chair of the board of directors at Aboriginal Legal Services.

**—2020 U of T Virtual Pride, Sexual & Gender Diversity Office**

Pride events for 2020 celebrated our diverse 2SLGBTQ+ communities, highlighting the work of Two-Spirit, 2SLGBTQ+, and racialized artists and community leaders. U of T's Virtual Tri-Campus "More Colour; More Pride" Flag Raising, featuring the addition of a black and brown stripe, acknowledged the inclusion of queer and trans Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (QTBIPOC) individuals and communities. At "Auntie Jenny's Story Time for Kids and Their Families," Jenny Blackbird and authors shared two children's books, and introduced Indigenous culture and knowledge to explore gender expression, identity, and allyship. A virtual Pride Concert, co-hosted by the Sexual & Gender Diversity Office, First Nations House, and Hart House, featured Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ musicians and performers, and included experimental

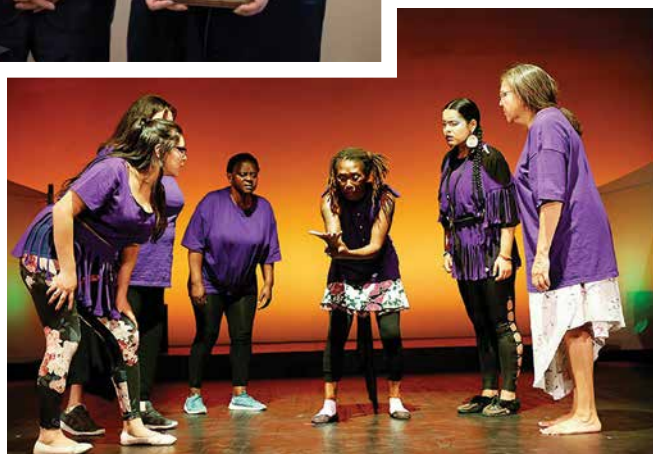
classical music, spoken word, traditional Indigenous hand drumming, and a QTBIPOC deejay set.

**—2019 Pow Wows on campus**

In 2019, U of T held two Pow Wows: one was the annual Indigenous Studies Students' Union Pow Wow on St. George campus, and the second was the first-ever Pow Wow by the Scarborough Campus Students Union, under the guidance of the UTSC Elder. The UTSC Pow Wow featured Indigenous knowledge-sharing, singing, and dance, and forged new community partnerships. This was the third year for the annual Indigenous Studies Students' Union Pow Wow at UTSG, which draws large crowds, as well as national and international dancers, artists, and Elders.

**—2019-20 Encounters at the "Edge of the Woods" with Jill Carter @ Hart House Theatre, UTSG**

To commemorate Hart House's 100th anniversary, the Hart House Theatre 2019-20 season opened with Encounters at the "Edge of the Woods." The performance explored the restor(y)ation of treaty relationships using Indigenous practices of Storyweaving through deep connections to the land. Led by Indigenous educator and artist Jill Carter, the piece included performers and creators from all over the city who used their personal stories and experiences to compose the work. For more information, please visit <https://hart-house.ca/theatre/show/encounters-at-the-edge-of-the-woods>.



—**2019-20 Indigenous Student Swim Initiative, Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education (KPE), UTSG**

In an ongoing partnership with ISS/FNH introduced in 2018, KPE offers subsidized swimming lessons at no cost to Indigenous students during the school year. This Indigenous Student Swim Initiative offers four levels of swimming instruction: Absolute Beginner, Beginner, Intermediate, and Stroke Mechanics. Pool staff are trained by Indigenous cultural educators to help create an open, welcoming, and respectful environment for Indigenous students to learn to swim. These swim classes are integrated classes with other U of T students, and efforts are made to pair Indigenous students with at least one other Indigenous student in each class.

—**Connections with Métis Community (Louis Riel Day annual event), Office of Student Experience and Wellbeing, UTSC**

The Office of Student Experience and Wellbeing builds relationships with members of the local Métis community to broaden the educational opportunities available to the Scarborough campus. In 2019 and 2020, they offered Métis storytelling on Louis Riel Day as well as Métis art workshops.

—**2019 UNESCO International Year of Indigenous Languages, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) Library, UTSG**

In celebration of the 2019 UNESCO International Year of Indigenous Languages and in collaboration with the Centre for Indigenous Studies' Ciiman/Kahuwe'yá/Qajaq, the OISE Library hosted a series of events focused on Indigenous Language Collections. UNESCO called for the celebration of Indigenous languages to raise awareness of and appreciation for the integral role they have in shaping cultural diversity. The OISE events included Indigenous Storytimes using Indigenous children's literature from the OISE Library and language events with Elders around campus. The programming culminated in a showcase of Indigenous language materials from the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library.

—**Pro Bono Students Canada's Indigenous Human Rights Program, Faculty of Law, UTSG**

The Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC) is an



organization founded and headquartered at the U of T Faculty of Law. In partnership with the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), the PBSC created an Indigenous Human Rights Program. Together, they are launching a free human rights legal clinic for self-identifying Indigenous people, housed at the Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre. The program is led by an Advisory Council co-chaired by PBSC and the OFIFC and comprises Indigenous and non-Indigenous representatives from other project partners. For more information, please visit <https://www.probonostudents.ca/indigenous-peoples>.

—**Indigenous Education Network's 30th Anniversary Celebration and Programming, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), UTSG**

The Indigenous Education Network (IEN) celebrated its 30th anniversary at OISE throughout 2019-20. Established in 1989, the IEN shared its history as an important site of Indigenous presence at OISE and U of T through a visual history display drawing from stories shared by people involved since its conception. This display was permanently installed in one of the IEN Office's collaboration rooms. Celebrations also included a special 30th Anniversary Lecture Series, and expansion of co-curricular programming and supports for Indigenous students.

U of T's 2019 Honouring Our Students Pow Wow, hosted by the Indigenous Studies Students' Union

# Challenges

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**As part of the University's** responsibilities to accountability, the Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII) requested feedback from every University department and faculty about challenges experienced by Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and librarians and what supports are required to overcome those challenges. Notable themes emerging from the responses are as follows:

- Limited capacity and access to supports to carry out Indigenous initiatives, and overburdening Indigenous faculty and staff;
- Increased demand for Indigenous cultural competency training;
- The sudden shift to virtual spaces during the pandemic;
- Maintaining focus on relationship development with the U of T Indigenous community;
- Lack of broad awareness and communication of Indigenous initiatives, available support services, and leadership activities throughout the University;
- Lack of consistent funding for Indigenous curriculum, events, and educators; and
- Lack of recognition of Indigenous pedagogy and teachers as equally valid and valued as non-Indigenous modes of education and educators.

The University is committed to addressing barriers in several ways, including hiring Indigenous faculty and staff members; recruiting Indigenous students; advancing Indigenous curriculum; promoting awareness of Indigenous issues; increasing access to technology and skill development for online media; and seeking funding and partnerships.

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## section

# 3





# Next Steps, Looking Forward



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## section

# 4

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**U of T remains committed** to its role in advancing reconciliation throughout the University in ways that are relevant to and collaborative with Indigenous members of the U of T community. As the Office of Indigenous Initiatives continues to grow, so will its impact on the U of T community in advancing Indigenous issues with transparency, accountability, and proficiency.



Rendering of future UTSC  
Indigenous House

### —Construction of Indigenous House, UTSC

The UTSC Indigenous House will create a safe space honouring and celebrating Indigenous ways of knowing and will act as a hub to ensure that all Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and initiatives can be supported and can thrive at UTSC. Over the 2020–21 academic year, students and staff have been engaged with the project and have provided feedback on its design and development phases. For more information, please visit <https://utsc.utoronto.ca/news-events/our-community/u-t-scarboroughs-indigenous-house-draws-inspiration-indigenous-culture-and-ways>.

### —Taddle Creek: The Indigenous Landscape Project @ Hart House, UTSC

The Indigenous Landscape Project aims to honour Taddle Creek while creating an outdoor space where the Indigenous community can gather and see themselves represented on campus. The project, to be installed on 4,500 square metres of Hart House Green, will feature a knowledge house and amphitheatre and will incorporate Indigenous plant life. It came out of *Answering the Call: Wecheehetowin: Final Report of the Steering Committee for the University of Toronto Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, which called for a “prominent, visible space at the very centre of the St. George campus [to] be dedicated as an Indigenous space,” based on consultations with Indigenous stakeholders at the University. For more information, please visit <https://indigenouslandscape.utoronto.ca/>.

### —Construction of ACT Building, UTM

The building, to be constructed on land across from Deerfield Hall and Maanjiwe Nendamowinan on Outer Circle Road, will focus on arts, culture, and technology. This focus also provides its working title: the ACT Building. Space within the ACT Building is expected to include an expansion of the Blackwood Gallery as well as an Indigenous

centre, restaurant, tiered lecture theatre for film viewings, and relocation of the Institute of Communication, Culture, Information and Technology and Computer Science offices.

### —Renovations at First Nations House and Centre for Indigenous Studies, UTSG

The Indigenous Student Services at First Nations House (ISS/FNH) and the Centre for Indigenous Studies (CIS) are undergoing major renovations in the North Borden Building. The Resource Centre has been relocated within the third floor, and the main floor will feature an events/tutorial space shared between CIS and ISS/FNH, as well as dedicated office space for the Indigenous Students’ Association and the Indigenous Studies Students’ Union. CIS has also secured a classroom on the second floor of North Borden. These renovations provide an opportunity to create more accessible spaces, to update technology, and to improve event spaces within divisions.

### —New Office for the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, UTM

The Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation will soon have an office located in UTM’s Maanjiwe Nendamowinan Building. The purpose of the office is to facilitate a relationship between the First Nation and the University and to acknowledge and support their role as the hosts of the traditional territories upon which the campus resides.

### —Indigenous Research Network

The Indigenous Research Network and its website are expected to be launched in 2021. The Network’s development is informed by extensive consultations with Indigenous community stakeholders. This multi-campus, multi-dimensional network will include researchers, faculty members, and staff involved in Indigenous research related to the challenges that Indigenous peoples and communities face and will promote curricular transformations, as required. For more information, please visit <https://www.irn.utoronto.ca/>.







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**For more information**

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [indigenous.utoronto.ca](http://indigenous.utoronto.ca)  
CONTACT US AT [indigenous.initiatives@utoronto.ca](mailto:indigenous.initiatives@utoronto.ca)

