

FOR INFORMATION**PUBLIC****OPEN SESSION**

TO: Academic Board

SPONSOR: Professor Meric Gertler, President
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PRESENTER: See above.
CONTACT INFO:

DATE: May 19, 2022 for May 26, 2022

AGENDA ITEM: 8

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Introduction of Indigenous Ceremonial Element in Convocation

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

Under Section 5.2.5.(a.) the Terms of Reference of the Academic Board, with regard to Convocations, "...authority concerning decisions on procedures is delegated to a committee of the Chancellor, the President, the Chair of the Academic Board and the Secretary of the Governing Council."

GOVERNANCE PATH:

1. Ceremonials Committee [for approval] (May 16, 2022)
2. **Academic Board [for information] (May 26, 2022)**

HIGHLIGHTS:

In January 2017, *Wecheehetowin: Final Report of the Steering Committee for the University of Toronto Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* identified the imperative to enhance Indigenous inclusion at the University of Toronto, to begin the generational cultural shift towards reconciliation.

In the context of Convocation, Indigenous representation in the ceremony was one of the themes of the 2018-19 Convocation Review co-chaired by Bryn MacPherson, Assistant Vice-President, Office of the President and Chief of Protocol, and Sheree Drummond, Secretary of the Governing Council. In its [Report](#), the Advisory Committee recommended that further and broader consultation was required to identify the necessary ceremonial elements, to ensure respectful and appropriate Indigenous representation and inclusion.

Further to the Review Report and the Administrative Response, Ms MacPherson and Ms Drummond, in consultation with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, have implemented a number of initiatives in support of the goal of Indigenous representation and inclusion in Convocation.

These include a protocol for the wearing of Indigenous regalia at Convocation (see Convocation [website: Indigenous Graduands and Regalia](#) section). Indigenous elements have also been introduced in ceremonies where the honorary degree recipient has been a member of the Indigenous community. For example, an Elder presented an Eagle Feather to one recipient during a Convocation ceremony, and drummers have offered honour songs in tribute to honorary degree recipients.

Consultations around the inclusion of an Indigenous element in Convocation were undertaken by Shannon Simpson, Director, Office of Indigenous Initiatives, and her predecessor, with members of the Elders Circle, Indigenous leadership across the three U of T campuses, and the broader Indigenous community. As result, a recommendation was brought forward to the Ceremonials Committee for the inclusion of an Indigenous ceremonial element in the Chancellor's Procession at every Convocation ceremony, identified at this time as the Office of the President's **Eagle Feather**. Additionally, Ms MacPherson and Ms Drummond included recommendations around the ceremonial protocol required to integrate this element into the ceremony, which is summarized below.

The Eagle Feather, which was gifted to the Office of the President by Elders on the occasion of the U of T Truth and Reconciliation Steering Committee's Report [Entrustment Ceremony](#), shall be carried by an Indigenous ambassador, to be known as the **Eagle Feather Bearer**, in the Chancellor's Procession. The Eagle Feather Bearer will lead the Chancellor's procession and as such will precede the Bedel (who carries the University mace). The Eagle Feather will be displayed prominently on stage, near the University's Mace.

The Eagle Feather Bearer will be appointed by the relevant Principal or Dean for their Convocation ceremony, drawn from members of the University's Indigenous community of graduating students, current students, staff members, faculty members, alumni, and Elders. Prior to confirming the participation of the recommended individual(s), the Director of Indigenous Initiatives shall first review the recommendations. At multidivisional ceremonies, the Principals and Deans will decide amongst themselves who to recommend as Eagle Feather Bearer. If the Principal or Dean is unable to identify an Eagle Feather Bearer, the Offices of Indigenous Initiatives, Convocation and President will select an individual from one of the following categories: Elder, Indigenous staff or faculty member.

Ceremonial regalia worn by the Eagle Feather Bearer will be created in the future in consultation with the Offices of Indigenous Initiatives, Convocation, and President. Alternatively, the Eagle Feather Bearer may wear their own traditional regalia in the Chancellor's Procession. For the Spring 2022 Convocation cycle, as an alternative to wearing traditional regalia, the Eagle Feather Bearer may choose to wear an academic gown with the First Nations House stole, as worn at the recently held Indigenous Graduation Ceremony.

At its meeting on May 16, 2022, the Ceremonials Committee accepted the recommendation that an Indigenous ceremonial element, identified at this time as the Office of the President’s Eagle Feather, be included in the Chancellor’s Procession at every Convocation ceremony

On a motion duly moved, seconded and carried

It was Resolved

THAT the inclusion of an Indigenous ceremonial element be included in the Chancellor’s Procession at Convocation effective June 1, 2022.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

n/a

RECOMMENDATION:

For information.