Recommendation for a change in name of the Centre for Aboriginal Initiatives and the Aboriginal Studies program to the Centre for Indigenous Studies (and Indigenous Studies program) December 2015, revised March 2016

The Centre for Aboriginal Initiatives proposes a change in name, to Centre for Indigenous Studies. The Centre offers an undergraduate program (Specialist, Major, Minor), currently called Aboriginal Studies; this would be called Indigenous Studies.

The change in name is highly supported by the Centre on the grounds that the term ‘Aboriginal’ is no longer the current term in use. When the undergraduate program in Aboriginal Studies was formed in 1994, various consultations were done and the term ‘Aboriginal’ was deemed the most appropriate. When the Centre for Aboriginal Initiatives was established in 2005, there was considerable debate about which term to use, and it was finally agreed to continue to use ‘Aboriginal’ since, at that time, ‘Aboriginal’ was used to refer to peoples of Canada and the term being proposed now, ‘Indigenous’, was international in connotation.

The past ten years have seen a general shift in Canada to the use of the term ‘Indigenous.’ Universities are switching from names like Aboriginal Studies and Native Studies to Indigenous Studies and newer programs use the term ‘Indigenous’ (e.g., Trent, McMaster, Queens, University of Saskatchewan, UBC, University of Victoria, McGill University all use ‘Indigenous’).

Most recently, the new federal government under the leadership of Justin Trudeau renamed Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

This change in name has been discussed on and off in the Centre for Aboriginal Initiatives over the past ten years but no action was taken. Following the change in name at the federal level, the change was discussed at a meeting of the Centre in early December with follow up by email. There was unanimous agreement that the name should be changed. The meeting was attended by instructors, students, and staff, and all were in favour of the change. It was also discussed with the Director of First Nations House (part of Student Life), and he too was supportive of this change.

Any financial resources required to implement the name change will be absorbed within the Centre. The name change will be incorporated in external communications in the course of updating such materials. The name change is proposed to be effective pending university governance approval.

Recommendation
That the change in name from the Centre for Aboriginal Initiatives to the Centre for Indigenous Studies, and as part of this, the change of the undergraduate program from Aboriginal Studies to Indigenous Studies, be approved effective immediately pending approval of University governance. Along with this, change the designator from ABS to INS.