

Report & Recommendations of the Decanal Advisory Committee on Indigenous Teaching & Learning, 2019-20

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Acknowledging the land:

The University, in response to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, has committed to a long-term process of acknowledging and repairing the devastating effects for Indigenous peoples of the residential school system, Canadian colonialism, and ongoing systemic racism. Universities helped to enable the residential school system by training the teachers and government officials who ran the system; it is the responsibility of universities to undertake change that enables just relations with Indigenous peoples and fosters Indigenous empowerment. Accepting this responsibility requires transforming cultures of research, teaching, governance, and community engagement in A&S by learning from Indigenous scholars, students, and communities.

In that spirit, we begin by acknowledging the land on which the Faculty of Arts & Science at the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years this land has been the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Overview:

Established in July 2018, the Dean's Advisory Committee on Indigenous Teaching & Learning has focused on implementing Calls to Action from the [A&S ITL Working Group](#). In 2019-20, the Committee's work was guided by an overarching principle: meaningful change cannot be based solely on an additive model. Hiring more professors and proposing more courses is important, but not sufficient. A&S needs to go beyond a land acknowledgement to ask: **in what ways does Arts & Science need to transform itself to meet the commitments it has made to Indigenous research, teaching, learning, and community partnerships?**

In light of the serious social, financial, infrastructural, and pedagogical challenges that A&S faces due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee urges the Dean to continue foregrounding Indigenous-related priorities. Indigenous researchers, teachers, and communities offer significant resources and models for how to survive, adapt, and build stronger networks of relation in the wake of epidemics, as they have been doing so for centuries. They are leaders in pedagogies for

distance learning, in analyses of water, housing, food, and internet insecurity, and in developing effective and interdisciplinary approaches to healing, public health, and medicine for communities in crisis; they are more important than ever as colleagues and partners who make vital contributions to the Faculty, the University, and wider communities.

Priority Recommendations:

These five priority recommendations build on the Academic Plan, which calls for a multi-year strategy for “cultivating opportunities and structural support for Indigenous-related research partnerships, language instruction, and experiential and land-based learning” and for the recruitment and retention of “Indigenous faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students, and post-doctoral fellows.” More detail regarding the specific action items can be found below.

1. **Move forward with building and space commitments.**
 - Build an Indigenous Hub, a purpose-built space for the Centre for Indigenous Studies and First Nations House.
 - Continue renovations of current CIS space.
 - Keep alert for additional opportunities to amplify Indigenous presence and space.
2. **Establish research as an integral part of the Committee’s mandate.**
 - Committee name change: Dean’s Advisory Committee on Indigenous Research, Teaching, and Learning (IRTL).
 - Build communication across research networks within A&S and U of T more widely.
 - Enhance ethical, not extractive, research opportunities.
 - Develop strategy for supporting research partnerships with communities.
 - Develop strategy for engaging with external research bodies.
3. **Recruit and retain Indigenous faculty, staff, and students.**
 - Develop a strategy for retention planning.
 - Support and engage with relevant Provostial initiatives.
 - Help faculty, students, and staff understand how they can actively engage with Indigenous research, teaching, and learning in ways relevant to their areas of study.
4. **Ensure accountability and strong networks of communication in the Dean’s Office and the Faculty.**
 - Assign a Vice-Dean to co-chair the IRTL and to chair a steering committee within the Dean’s Office that meets several times a year to evaluate success and ensure communication on Indigenous-related initiatives across Vice-Decanal portfolios.
 - Assess how the IRTL fits into formal governance at A&S.
 - Highlight the role of the Indigenous Research, Teaching, and Learning Committee.
5. **Support land-based and community-engaged undergraduate teaching & learning.**

- Leverage existing Indigenous-related digital research and teaching projects in A&S.
- Establish an ITL Fellow within the Online Learning Academy.
- Continue support for experiential, community-engaged, international, and Indigenous-related learning.
- Continue and enhance engagement with First Story.

Detailed Action Items:

1. Move forward with building and space commitments:

- **Build an Indigenous Hub, a purpose-built space for the Centre for Indigenous Studies and First Nations House:** In Fall 2019, based on years of planning and visioning from many committees and stakeholders, A&S committed to partnering with the Office of the Provost to build an Indigenous “Hub” or “College” with the Centre for Indigenous Studies and First Nations House as the lead occupants. The Committee strongly recommends that A&S make it a priority to ensure that the work of the Indigenous Space Steering Committee, supported by Campus & Facilities Planning, move ahead in a timely way.
- **Continue renovations of current CIS space:** Plans are underway for renovations of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd floors of the North Borden Building, including expanded space for the Centre for Indigenous Studies and Indigenous student groups.
- **Keep alert for additional opportunities to amplify Indigenous presence and space:** The CAO and Director of the Office of Infrastructure Planning have been excellent champions of finding additional opportunities to amplify Indigenous presence in A&S spaces, design, and wayfinding, as for example, with plans for the Huron St. side of the Sidney Smith student space. Ensuring this priority is communicated to Chairs, Directors, and Principals, etc. across A&S as they plan for space needs will help to better materialize the land acknowledgment in the buildings and on the grounds of our campus.

2. Establish research as an integral part of the committee’s mandate.

- **Change the committee’s name** to the Dean’s Advisory Committee on Indigenous Research, Teaching, and Learning (IRTL).
- **Building Communication across research networks within A&S and U of T:** The Committee should include representatives from the Office of Research Services, led by the Vice-Dean Research, and should establish strong links with relevant staff in the Office of the VP, Research and Innovation, as well as with the Provost’s Academic Advisor on Indigenous Research. (The Committee had invited Prof. Stewart to the March 2020 meeting, which was cancelled in the early days of the COVID-19 campus closure).
- **Enhance ethical, not extractive, research opportunities:** The Vice-Dean, Research, in coordination with the Vice-Dean, Faculty, Academic Life & Equity, the Vice-

- Dean, Graduate, and the Vice-Dean, Undergraduate, should develop a plan for supporting Indigenous researchers, including through greater access to CRCs, graduate fellowships, post-doctoral fellowships, undergraduate research opportunities, and other institutional supports both within and beyond U of T.
- **Develop strategy for supporting research partnerships with communities:** Faculty and graduate students working on Indigenous-related research projects should be supported by A&S to develop community-engaged and partnership models rather than working with an extractive model of research. The Committee recommends a coordinated strategy overseen by the Vice-Dean, Research, with participation of the Vice-Dean, Graduate and the Vice-Dean, Undergraduate, along with the Directors of Experiential Learning and Outreach Support, Research Services, and Strategic Partnerships.
 - **Indigenous research ethics protocols:** All researchers who work with Indigenous nations and/or community organizations would benefit from more robust support from the Faculty to build appropriate research ethics protocols in keeping with both Tri-Council guidelines and the protocols of specific Indigenous nations.
 - **Solutions for honoraria/payments to Elders:** ongoing conversations with the Finance Office, Office of Indigenous Initiatives, and others have yet to yield a solution for protocols and guides that researchers and business officers can consult when paying honoraria to Elders, knowledge keepers, and language experts etc.; this solution must be informed by evolving Tri-Council guidelines.
 - **Research-focused community engagement:** the Faculty needs to develop a flexible but principled strategy in support of Indigenous research: e.g. MOUs with First Nations and Indigenous organizations. Establishing these relations will have a beneficial effect on student, staff, and faculty recruitment. Here, the new Indigenous Partnerships and Outreach staff member in the Office of Strategic Partnerships will be key to tracking and connecting the many efforts at community engagement across A&S; they can work with ELOS to include undergraduate research and experiential learning opportunities in this tracking.
 - **Develop strategy for engaging with external research bodies:** A&S should ensure its engagement with and representation on, where possible, Indigenous-related initiatives within research bodies and consortia external to the university, such as:
 - **Tri-Council committees**, including: Tri-Council Strategic Plan on “Setting new directions to support Indigenous research and research training in Canada 2019-2022”; SSHRC’s Indigenous Advisory Circle, the CIHR Reference Group for the Appropriate Review of Indigenous Research
 - **Royal Society of Canada** special reports and features

- **Fulbright Canada** Research Chair opportunities for Indigenous visiting professors, held at specific Canadian universities (but not U of T).
- **Newberry Library's Consortium in American Indian Studies**

3. Recruit and retain Indigenous faculty, staff, and students

- **Develop strategy for retention planning:** With over 10 recent hires of Indigenous scholars across A&S, and a concerted effort to attract more Indigenous post-doctoral fellows, faculty, graduate students, students, staff, and community partners, A&S needs to plan for retention, and ask, what would it take to make A&S a more attractive place for Indigenous faculty, students, and staff to research, study, and work? Even with the current financial climate, other universities are still making offers to our Indigenous faculty, seeking to draw away some of our most innovative and excellent researchers.
 - **How can A&S facilitate Indigenous empowerment?** The answer to this question will be different according to discipline. A coordinated approach from the Dean's Office is required, signalling acknowledgment of issues such as: the requirements and demands of doing research in partnership with Indigenous communities, whether as a fish biologist, a linguist, a political scientist, or a literature specialist; developing a stronger mentorship support system for Indigenous faculty and ensuring Chairs are aware of these supports, both at the level of A&S and the OII.
 - **Adapting and revising HR processes** to attract and retain Indigenous faculty and staff. For example, in the 2018-19 academic year, efforts were made to develop a process of cohort hires and build cross-departmental support for Chairs leading searches for Indigenous faculty so that prospective applicants understood the broader community of Indigenous scholars they would be joining.
 - **An A&S strategy for engagement with First Nations educational counsellors for Indigenous student recruitment and retention** requires more than an individually focused or admissions-focused approach, and instead requires meaningful long-term relationships with Indigenous communities in the GTA and on-reserve. The OFR can work more directly with First Nations House and the Office of Strategic Partnerships to develop a student recruitment strategy.
- **Support and engage with relevant Provostial initiatives:** Especially at this time of financial uncertainty, we urge A&S to strongly support the continuation of the Provost's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program and to develop a strategic plan for A&S to most effectively engage with all Provostial plans/funding for increasing Indigenous faculty, post-doctoral fellows, students and staff. Strong A&S connections with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, whose Director serves on the Committee, is crucial for this engagement.

- **Help all faculty, students, and staff to understand how they can actively engage with Indigenous research, teaching, and learning in ways that are relevant to their areas of study.**
 - **Representatives from all sectors of A&S** have served on the ITL Committee, including from Earth Sciences, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, English, Geography, Indigenous Studies, Mathematics, Political Science, Study of Religion, and more. It is clear that every discipline has something to learn from thinking through what it means to research and study on Indigenous land (and waters).

4. **Ensure accountability and strong networks of communication in A&S and beyond.**

- **Assign a Vice-Dean to co-chair the IRTL and to chair a steering committee within the Dean's Office that meets several times a year to evaluate success and ensure communication on Indigenous-related initiatives across Vice-Decanal portfolios.**
 - **Indigenous-related initiatives and commitments** cut across every Vice-Decanal portfolio; to ensure accountability and knowledge sharing, the Committee recommends that a small steering committee of Vice-Deans (especially Academic Planning, Undergraduate, Graduate, Research, and Faculty, Academic Life & Equity) and relevant staff meet regularly with the Co-Chairs of the IRTL Committee, one of whom should be a Vice-Dean.
- **Assess how the IRTL fits into formal governance at A&S.** Is this a Committee for a limited time period, or one that will need to remain in place for the foreseeable future? How does this Committee interact with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, and other similar bodies across the university? Revisit the Terms of Reference of the Committee to start.
- **Highlight the role of the Indigenous Research, Teaching, and Learning Committee** as a conduit of knowledge sharing, policy discussion, and the testing of ideas.
 - **Circulate a call for nominations:** many of the members of the Committee, including one of the Co-Chairs, will be stepping down after serving two-year terms; some members should be asked to stay on for another year to ensure continuity. In order to highlight the work of the Committee and engage a broad range of new perspectives, the Committee recommends have a CPAD memo with a call for nominations for new members, which includes details of areas requiring representation.
 - **Circulate a call for presentations to the Committee:** Faculty and staff from across A&S have presented aspects of their work both for information to and feedback from the ITL Committee. For example, College Registrars benefitted from feedback on Orientation from

Committee members. We recommend expanding this consultative role for the Committee, by circulating a call to Colleges, Departments, Centres, and administrative offices to bring their projects-in-development to the Committee for feedback.

- **Curriculum and Student Experience Public-Facing Report:** A&S needs to get the word out to Indigenous communities and wider publics about our efforts in this area.
 - **Updates about ITL initiatives** from Arts & Science units and Colleges were solicited by the Committee and we received information about many curricular and student experience initiatives across A&S.
 - **We recommend that a public-facing report** designed by the Office of Faculty Communications and Public Affairs rework these updates, with the participation and consent of the relevant units. Assistant Director of T&L Initiatives could take the lead on the first draft, working with the ITL Liaison for A&S and the new Indigenous Partnerships & Outreach Coordinator.
 - **Define responsibility for updating the Indigenous Learning and Knowledge page:** the Office of Communications and Public Relations has built a well-designed page on the A&S website but it requires regular updating, and a clearer process for who is responsible for ensuring this happens in a timely and accurate manner.
 - **Ensuring strong communication about Indigenous research, hiring, and curricular initiatives between A&S and UTM, UTSC, other Faculties at UTSG, and the Office of Indigenous Initiatives.**
 - **So much is happening** across the University in terms of Indigenous research, teaching, and learning that it is in everyone's interest to make sure that A&S is aware of what is going on elsewhere. This is a responsibility that reaches into the portfolio of every Vice-Dean and Director in the Dean's Office; a plan for knowledge sharing is required.
- 5. Support land-based and community-engaged undergraduate teaching & learning even during a prolonged time of online/remote learning:**
- **Leverage already existing Indigenous-related digital research and teaching opportunities in A&S.**
 - **Many researchers across A&S already have digital projects** that involve undergraduate and graduate students and are engaged with Indigenous organizations; how could we leverage these projects for online learning in our current moment? For example, could the Office of Teaching and Learning help to build online teaching modules developed from A&S research projects with a strong digital presence such as GRASAC; Water Allies; First Story; Kiinawin Kawindomowin Story Nations; Salmon Coast Field Station and others?

- **As faculty build online resources for their teaching** more broadly, it is an excellent time for the Office of Teaching and Learning to help with building Indigenous-related modules in collaboration with faculty, and with U of T connected projects such as First Story, a community-engaged research and teaching project that focuses digital exhibits and guided tours of Indigenous Toronto.
- **Establish an ITL Fellow within the Online Learning Academy.**
 - As A&S encourages faculty and departments to creatively and ethically develop Indigenous Teaching and Learning approaches in their curriculum and courses, it is particularly important to have an Indigenous professor with digital expertise in the OLA Fellowship.
 - Specific questions include ethics and protocols for online teaching, including how to appropriately host guest speakers and Elders, how to practice care for students when discussing challenging topics, how to encourage small group discussion, and how to avoid exacerbating extractive approaches to Indigenous knowledge.
- **Continue support for experiential, community-engaged, international, and Indigenous-related learning.**
 - **The Committee recommends that the Experiential Learning and Outreach Support** develop a strategy for engaging with Indigenous land-based education, starting within its current experiential offerings (ROP, REP, ICM, DIIIF).
 - **ELOS can continue to underscore the understanding that Indigenous research**, teaching, and learning opportunities are “International”, in the sense of “nation-to-nation”.
- **Continued and enhanced engagement with First Story.**
 - **Woodsworth College** has supported the integration of First Story campus tours with the First-Year Foundations Seminars and other classes through giving a teaching release to a faculty member engaged with First Story. As First Story develops stronger links with U of T through an APUF grant that is training Indigenous students and youth, A&S students and faculty would benefit from more robust partnerships with this project.