

**Decanal Advisory Committee on Indigenous Research, Teaching & Learning
Interim Report 2020/2021 – 2021/2022**

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A&S support: Erin Macnab, Assistant Director, Teaching & Learning Initiatives & Emma Stromberg, Indigenous Partnerships Advisor, Office of the Dean

Acknowledgements:

The Decanal Advisory Committee on Indigenous Research, Teaching and Learning (IRTL) wishes to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Overview:

This interim report serves as an update to the Arts & Science (A&S) community regarding the Committee's activity between the 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic terms. The action items identified below are currently in process and a more detailed report will be provided during the Fall/Winter term of 2022/23.

1) Truth and Reconciliation

In 2020/21, the IRTL Committee discussed the importance of understanding the provenance of endowment wealth at A&S and how this wealth might be implicated, directly or indirectly, in the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands and territories. This discussion was not meant to diminish or negate the generous and meaningful financial contributions made to A&S in support of research and teaching excellence, but to better understand the history of the institution in relation to Indigenous peoples.

***Action Item:** By March 2022, hire a Research Associate to put together a historical sketch of large endowment gifts made to A&S.*

2) Support for Indigenous Research and Indigenous-Related Research

Enhanced research capacity associated with/undertaken at the Centre for Indigenous Studies would support the broader goal of A&S becoming, "a place where Indigenous languages, forms of cultural expression, systems of knowledge, theories and research methodologies are

transmitted and are critically and rigorously studied at the most advanced levels.”¹ The Committee identified that the following resource would support this goal:

Action item: *Set up a webinar series discussing what it means to do Indigenous research. A working group from the IRTL Committee and CIS by invitation to be established by March 2022.*

3) Financial & Other Processes

Honoraria

Committee members identified that when providing honoraria, the application of finance policies can create specific barriers for Indigenous peoples. This includes, but is not limited to, onerous paperwork/administration, delays in receipt of payment, and not receiving supplemental tax forms (TD1-IN) during the set-up process. Greater consistency and education are needed concerning best practices within existing finance policies.

Action Item: *Check in with divisional colleagues in Finance on progress to address financial processes with regards to payments that support Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers.*

Social Procurement

Procurement is an important dimension of how the fiscal policy of A&S can work in service to the goal of fostering and supporting relationships with Indigenous peoples, communities and organizations. By creating a positive obligation to prioritize Indigenous vendors, corporations, and service providers, A&S can support Indigenous economies and self-determination.

Action Item: *Explore, with divisional colleagues in this area, linking preferred vendor status to more Indigenous vendors, corporations, and service providers.*

Guidelines for Working with Indigenous Elders/Knowledge Keepers

The IRTL Committee identified a need to update the guidelines for working with Indigenous Elders and recommended that these be expanded to include Knowledge Keepers. These guidelines are an internal document that could be more widely distributed in support of meaningful Indigenous engagement across the faculty once updated.

¹ Decanal Working Group on Indigenous Teaching and Learning, [Report](#), (Toronto: Faculty of Arts & Science, Office of the Dean, 2017), 3.

Action Item: Update the guide to working with Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers. Align this with work being undertaken at the Office of Indigenous Initiatives on honoraria guidelines.

4) Indigenous Faculty, Staff and Student Recruitment and Retention

Visibility

Indigenous Postdoctoral Fellows are in high demand at universities. Enhanced structural support that serves to highlight and make visible the innovative research and teaching taking place at A&S with respect to Indigenous languages, cultures, and knowledge systems, is a key component of any Indigenous-specific recruitment and retention strategy.

Action Item: Collaborate with the Dirs. of Academic and Administrative HR to identify hiring priorities for Indigenous faculty and staff across A&S and at CIS.

Students

Being able to gather, hold ceremonies, and access cultural supports are critical dimensions of Indigenous pedagogies and student wellbeing. Due to ongoing and much needed renovations to the CIS and First Nations House (FNH), and pandemic restrictions, our ability to offer these kinds of learning experiences and supports to Indigenous students has been impacted.

Action Item: Collaborate with FNH, College Principals and Registrars to better understand the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on Indigenous students.

Identity-Based Data Collection

At a high level, access to disaggregated, anonymized data is critical to understanding if we are achieving our recruitment and retention goals and where there are gaps. It is also important for the committee to have a solid understanding of the sites and mechanisms of identity-based data collection at A&S and to have the opportunity to advise on these as appropriate.

Action Item: Work with the A&S Dir. of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) to request a briefing from the Office of the Faculty Registrar at A&S, the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students, and the Office of the Vice-President, People Strategy, Equity & Culture, on identity-based data collection at A&S and U of T more broadly.

5) Teaching & Curriculum

Experiential Learning

The Committee identified that experiential learning has historically been focused on STEM and would like to see these kinds of opportunities continue to grow in the context of Indigenous community and organizational partnerships. Institutional barriers to culturally relevant practices of reciprocity need to be examined from a policy lens to ensure alignment with the communities we partner with and to enable deeper and more meaningful collaborations.

Action Item: *Work with the Office of Experiential Learning & Outreach Support to identify opportunities for new experiential learning in the context of Indigenous community and organization partnerships.*

Languages

The CIS and the Dept. of Linguistics have expanded course offerings in Indigenous languages and Indigenous language revitalization and documentation. Through recent hires in both units, there is now a growing body of experts in Indigenous language revitalization.

Action Item: *Make inquiry to Vice-Dean, Graduate Education to explore opportunities to expand Indigenous language learning in the School of Graduate Studies (SGS).*

6) Indigenous Research Ethics

The topic of Indigenous research ethics permeated many areas of the Committee's discussions. Notably, an Indigenous Research Ethics Board is being established by the Vice-President, Research & Innovation and will include Indigenous faculty from A&S. The IRTL Committee will continue to advise and collaborate on the core issues impacting Indigenous research at A&S and will continue to engage and partner with Research Services and the SGS to offer programming for students and faculty to engage with Indigenous research ethics.

7) Evaluation Processes

Progress Through the Ranks (PTR)

The IRTL Committee identified that Indigenous faculty contribute a great deal of service on behalf of and for the University that is not necessarily recognized in terms of the PTR processes. This includes educating colleagues about residential schools, drafting resource lists for faculty, speaking engagements at neighbouring institutions, and organizing community-based events that build relationships and credibility. The Committee requested more information on how these kinds of contributions may be weighed in terms of PTR.

Action Item: Invite the Vice-Dean, Faculty and Academic Life for a discussion with the Committee on PTR processes to inform advice going forward.

Qualifications

The Committee also reflected on the ways in which institutional processes that evaluate knowledge and scholarship are not equipped to recognize the contributions of Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers to the University's mission of excellence. Should a recommendation come forward to hire an Elder as a faculty member who does not possess academic credentialing, advanced discussions with the academic leadership of the Faculty, the Office of the Vice-Provost, Faculty & Academic Life, and other offices, may be required. The committee intends to further deliberate on this matter, and in the interim, work with the Dean's Office to determine where best to position new hires who are Elders or Knowledge Keepers.