



INDIGENOUS INITIATIVES

2019
ANNUAL PROGRESS
REPORT



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Director, Indigenous Initiatives

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Cover Photos / Above
March 2019 U of T Pow Wow
organized by the Indigenous Studies
Students' Union (ISSU).

Actions Speak Loudest

Responding to the Calls to Action of the Steering Committee for the U of T Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)

Jonathan Hamilton-Diabo, Director, Indigenous Initiatives. The Office of Indigenous Initiatives is tasked with documenting the Calls to Action.



section 1

FOREWORD FROM JONATHAN HAMILTON-DIABO, DIRECTOR, INDIGENOUS INITIATIVES

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”).

THE FINAL REPORT was accompanied with an Eagle Feather to remind the University of the spirit in which the Final Report was being offered and received, and as a symbol of the University’s opportunity and the responsibility bestowed upon the University by the Calls to Action set out in the report (the “Calls to Action”).

The President and Vice-President & Provost received the Final Report as a guide to enhancing the Indigenous presence throughout the University and with the goal of engaging with the wider community.

The question for the University then becomes, *‘How do we accomplish these Calls to Action?’* The Final Report contained both short- and long-term goals within its 34 Calls to Action. This journey towards cultural change at the University is a process and it is important to remember that the

process itself is as important as the outcome. Real impact takes time and listening to not only a wide range of voices, but also to new voices.

We have made progress since the Final Report was released. The goal of this inaugural annual progress report is to document the many ways in which new and ongoing projects at U of T are addressing the Calls to Action. Since the Final Report was released, the University has welcomed many new Indigenous faculty and staff members to our community; facilitated the designation of Indigenous spaces on campuses; created a centralized online resource for Indigenous activities at the University; and much more.

My hope is that this will be the first of a series of annual reports from the Office of Indigenous Initiatives regarding the →

“

As this annual progress report makes clear, the U of T community has taken some important first steps in addressing the Calls to Action. I would like to thank the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and all those who have made these developments possible. The Provost and I were deeply honoured to receive the Eagle Feather, when the TRC Steering Committee presented its Final Report, and we reaffirm the University’s commitment to continuing the journey we began together that day.”

MERIC S. GERTLER
PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



Above

A photo of front campus, one of the most iconic and used green spaces on the U of T St. George Campus.

Right

Elder Andrew Wesley presented to President Meric Gertler and Vice-President & Provost Cheryl Regehr the Final Report of the TRC Steering Committee.



“

The collaborative efforts of our faculty, staff, and students have been invaluable in maintaining the University's focus on addressing the historical and present-day injustices that impact the Indigenous community. I truly appreciate the hard work of the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and U of T's academic divisions over the past year in making progress on the TRC Steering Committee's Calls to Action.”

CHERYL REGEHR
VICE-PRESIDENT & PROVOST
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

University's progress towards the Calls to Action. I also hope that these reports will not only highlight the ongoing work being done on all three campuses, but also serve to forge connections. Relationship-building and consultation are essential to accomplishing this goal. We have made great strides in focusing our efforts at U of T. However, much work remains to be done. As Director of Indigenous Initiatives at the University, I want to assure members of our community that the Office of Indigenous Initiatives understands the challenges faced by faculties, divisions, and indeed individuals in meeting these Calls to Action.

As both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the TRC Steering Committee have emphasized, genuine reconciliation can only take place where *truth* has been acknowledged and understood. While actions must be a focus, engagement and understanding must be the foundation. The Office of Indigenous Initiatives aims to coordinate the University's work while acknowledging hard truths about the past and present, and endeavouring to change mindsets rooted in colonial attitudes towards Indigenous peoples.

Institutional Support and Guidance

section 2



Michael D. White,
Special Projects Officer
of Indigenous Initiatives.

This section of the report adopts the same organization as the Final Report, examining the same overarching themes that were addressed by the TRC Steering Committee.

THE TRC STEERING COMMITTEE emphasized the need for senior leaders at the University to undertake initiatives and make some difficult decisions that would demonstrate their true commitment towards building better relationships with Indigenous peoples. The Final Report stated that many of these choices would require a balancing of financial priorities and oversight by institutional leadership.

—Creation of the Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII); Appointment of the Director, Indigenous Initiatives, and of the Special Projects Officer

Following the release of the Final Report, the University's leadership team recognized the need to build capacity in order to monitor and implement the Calls to Action. Shortly after the release of the report, the Vice-President & Provost and the Vice-President, Human Resources & Equity appointed Jonathan Hamilton-Diabo, the former Director of Aboriginal Student Services at First Nations House, as the University's first Director of Indigenous Initiatives. The Director's mandate is to:

Listen, coordinate, advise, and collaborate with academic and non-academic communities in addressing the TRC Steering Committee's Calls to Action. More specifically, the Director will engage Indigenous peoples in and outside of the University in the mission of the University, broadly intersecting with such areas as teaching and learning, student

experience, faculty and staff recruitment and engagement, and community-based research. In addition, the Director will Co-Chair the Council of Aboriginal Initiatives.

Not long after this appointment, the University's Office of Indigenous Initiatives was also established, and a Special Projects Officer of Indigenous Initiatives, Michael D. White, was hired to support the Director and this work. The Office's mandate is to support and guide the U of T community as it continues to work towards reconciliation. The Office also advises and oversees on 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.

—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. They are a vital presence at the University and we encourage the community to engage and grow in connection with them. The teachings and support of the University's Elders are regularly 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 together with the Director of Indigenous Initiatives. Its members include: Eileen Antone, Grafton Antone, Jan Longboat, Lee Maracle, Wendy Phillips, Ernie Sandy, Constance Simmonds, and Andrew Wesley. →



Professor Suzanne L. Stewart was appointed in January 2017 as the Director of the Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health (WBIH).

—Provostial Funding for Indigenous Faculty and Staff Recruitment

In keeping with the Final Report's assertion that a commitment to reconciliation would require substantial investments, the Vice-President & Provost has for the past three academic years made priority investments from the University Fund, to which all divisions contribute, to the recruitment of new Indigenous faculty and staff members.

Starting in the 2016-17 budget, the Vice-President & Provost dedicated a series of new University Fund allocations for hiring faculty members from under-represented groups into the University. In 2017-18, as a direct response to the Final Report of the TRC Steering Committee, the Vice-President & Provost dedicated a University Fund allocation specifically for the hiring of 20 new Indigenous faculty members, and 20 new Indigenous staff members.

To date, nineteen of the outstanding new faculty members who were hired through the Academic Diversity Hiring initiative were Indigenous scholars.

The Vice-President & Provost continues to prioritize funding for under-represented groups, with an additional 20 faculty positions for the 2019-20 academic year being dedicated to hiring Black and Indigenous scholars.

—International Indigenous Research Networks

U of T scholars have been engaged in international Indigenous research partnerships, which were facilitated by the University's Office of the Vice-President, International. An Indigenous delegation of U of T scholars led by Professor Suzanne L. Stewart, Director of the Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health (WBIH) joined workshops and meetings at the University of Sydney and met with counterparts at the University of Melbourne and the Melbourne Indigenous Transition School in Australia. One of the key outcomes of the visit was a

plan and funding application to support the mobility of U of T and Sydney students to engage in Indigenous research in Australia and Canada.

—Office of Human Resources & Equity's Indigenous Mentoring Day

U of T hosted its first Indigenous Mentoring Day this past February. This initiative matches members of the public who identify as Indigenous with experienced professionals from all three University of Toronto campuses. This experiential learning opportunity provides job seekers with unique insights about working at U of T and about its Indigenous community.

—Division of University Advancement (DUA)

U of T has received generous funds for Indigenous scholarships, Indigenous education, and Indigenous health. Gifts received through the University's Boundless Campaign include a \$10 million donation for the development of the Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health based at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, and a \$5 million donation for the creation of the Bennett Scholars program, which provides awards (on the basis of financial need) to full-time undergraduate students who have Indigenous backgrounds or whose parents did not attend university or college. U of T has also secured gifts for the following: the Burstow's Scholarship for Research into Violence Against Women; In Memory of Helen Betty Osborne; the RTW Integrated Health Management Innovation and Leadership Fund in Rehabilitation Science for Indigenous Health at the Faculty of Medicine; the Hart House Centennial Indigenous Art Fund; the OISE Indigenous Education Initiative; the Norman and Gay Loveland Award; and the Chung Canadian Indigenous Award at the Rotman School of Management.

Indigenous Spaces

Indigenous spaces are central to the Indigenous experience at the University. The TRC Steering Committee called on departments and faculties, and on the University itself, to increase the physical spaces used by Indigenous members and to enhance the visibility of Indigenous peoples in our community.

—Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health (WBIH)

Housed in the Dalla Lana School of Public Health (DLSPH), the WBIH has re-conceptualized their space to reflect the Indigenous aesthetic. The Institute's space, which includes Indigenous art, now features a new lounge and meeting room available to all Indigenous members of the U of T community who are attending or using the DLSPH. Smudging and ceremonies are conducted in the WBIH, as well as in other spaces in the DLSPH.

—Faculty of Law

The Manager of Indigenous Initiatives at the Faculty of Law has assisted in the installation of Indigenous signage in several Indigenous languages including Kwak'wala (Liq'wala dialect), Anishinaabemowin (Algonquin dialect), Oneida, Michif, and Cree (Plains dialect). The signage is situated outside of the Indigenous Law Students' Association (ILSA) office, which is used by Indigenous law students as a gathering, studying, and work space.



Left

The Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health (WBIH) now features a new lounge and meeting room available to all Indigenous members of the U of T community who are attending or using the Dalla Lana School of Public Health (DLSPH).

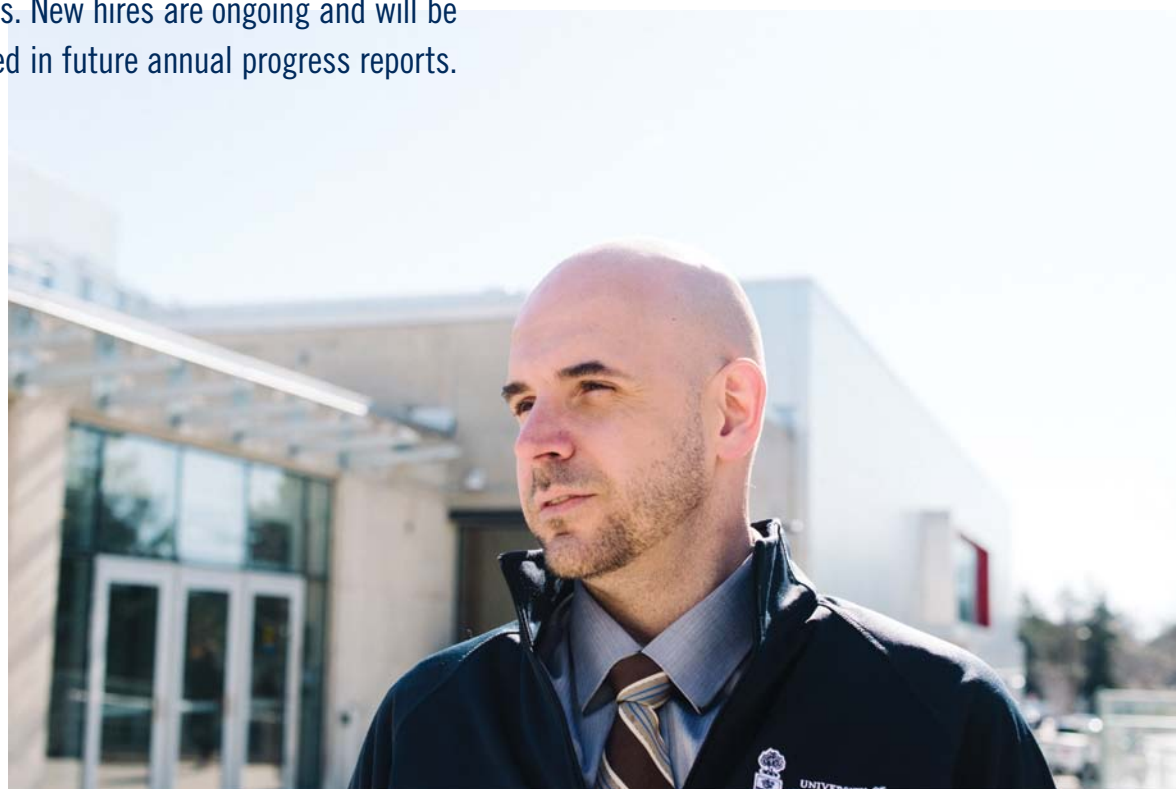
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Faculty of Law has installed Indigenous signage in several languages including Kwak'wala (Liq'wala dialect), Anishinaabemowin (Algonquin dialect), Oneida, Michif, and Cree (Plains dialect).



Indigenous Faculty and Staff

Indigenous faculty and staff members are vital to enhancing the University's Indigenous curricula and research. They provide an Indigenous perspective, and contribute academic and cultural support for Indigenous students. The TRC Steering Committee called upon all departments to recruit a significant number of Indigenous faculty and staff members over the next three years. New hires are ongoing and will be periodically featured in future annual progress reports.



Left
Romeo Fournier, Indigenous Academic Advisor & Career Strategist, University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC).

Below
Juanita Muise, Indigenous Engagement Coordinator, Department of Student Life, University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC).

—University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC)

UTSC has hired new Indigenous faculty and staff members including: Romeo Fournier, Indigenous Academic Advisor & Career Strategist, Academic Advising & Career Centre; Sarah Guay, Indigenous Librarian; and Juanita Muise, Indigenous Engagement Coordinator, Department of Student Life. As part of the recruitment and interview process, all candidates meet with the UTSC's Indigenous Elder, Wendy Phillips.

JUANITA MUISE (MI'KMAQ), INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR, DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT LIFE

In this new role in the Department of Student Life's Indigenous Outreach Program, Ms. Muise's main focus is to engage UTSC students, staff, and faculty with programming designed to connect these members to each other. In addition, she acts as a liaison between the UTSC community and Indigenous peoples outside the campus to build relationships. She also helps students who want to reconnect with their culture by creating safe spaces where students can learn and grow, and ask questions together. Prior to joining UTSC, Ms. Muise obtained her Masters of Professional Educational Leadership, with a specialization in Aboriginal Education, and was a teacher. Her long-term goal is to do her PhD in Education Leadership and Policy in order to have more influence over reconciliation work within education. →





—University of Toronto
Mississauga (UTM)

**PROFESSOR JENNIFER ADESE (OTIPEMISIW
AND MÉTIS), ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

Professor Adese was previously Associate Professor and Program Coordinator of Indigenous Studies in the School of Indigenous and Canadian Studies at Carleton University. She is currently working on a book project that analyzes the term “Aboriginal” and its rise to popular cultural and economic debate in the wake of the 1982 Canadian Constitution’s entrenchment of “Aboriginal rights.” She is also co-editor on the forthcoming book *New Directions in Métis Studies* from UBC Press. She is also co-editing the book *Indigenous Celebrity*, in development for University of Manitoba Press. In addition, Professor Adese is engaged in a long-term research project that examines the historical political organizing of Métis women.

**PROFESSOR ROBIN R. R. GRAY (TS’MSYEN
AND MIKISEW CREE), ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

Prior to joining UTM, Professor Gray held a University of California President’s Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of California Santa Cruz. She is a socio-cultural anthropologist and Indigenous Studies scholar. As a daughter of a residential school survivor, Professor Gray has researched the intergenerational effects of the Indian Residential School System with urban Native youth. Her current community-based research project focuses on the repatriation of Ts’msyen songs from archives, which includes issues related to ownership, access, and control of Indigenous cultural heritage.

—Ontario Institute for Studies
in Education (OISE)

OISE has hired new Indigenous faculty members: Professor Jennifer Brant, Assistant Professor, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning; and Professor Jennifer Wemigwans, Assistant Professor, Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education. →



**Opposite page
(left to right)**

Professor Jennifer Adese, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, UTM; and Professor Robin R. R. Gray, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, UTM.

Below

Professor Jennifer Wemigwans, Assistant Professor, Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE).



—Faculty of Music

PROFESSOR ELIOT BRITTON (MÉTIS), ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, FACULTY OF MUSIC
Professor Britton is a member of the Manitoba Métis Federation, Southwest Manitoba Region. He completed his PhD in music composition at the Schulich School of Music at McGill University, where he also worked as a course lecturer, researcher, curator, and composer-in-residence for numerous ensembles. Professor Britton is the recipient of numerous commissions, grants, and prizes. These accolades include the Connaught New Researcher Award, and commissions from the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Red Sky Performance, and Architek Percussion.

—Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering (FASE)

PROFESSOR JASON BAZYLAK (MÉTIS), ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, TEACHING STREAM, DEPARTMENT OF MECHANICAL AND INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING
Professor Bazylak is a member of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. He currently coordinates an award-winning first-year design course (Engineering Strategies and Practice), conducts research into reducing the under-representation of women and Indigenous peoples in engineering, and is the Dean's Advisor on Indigenous Initiatives at the Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering.



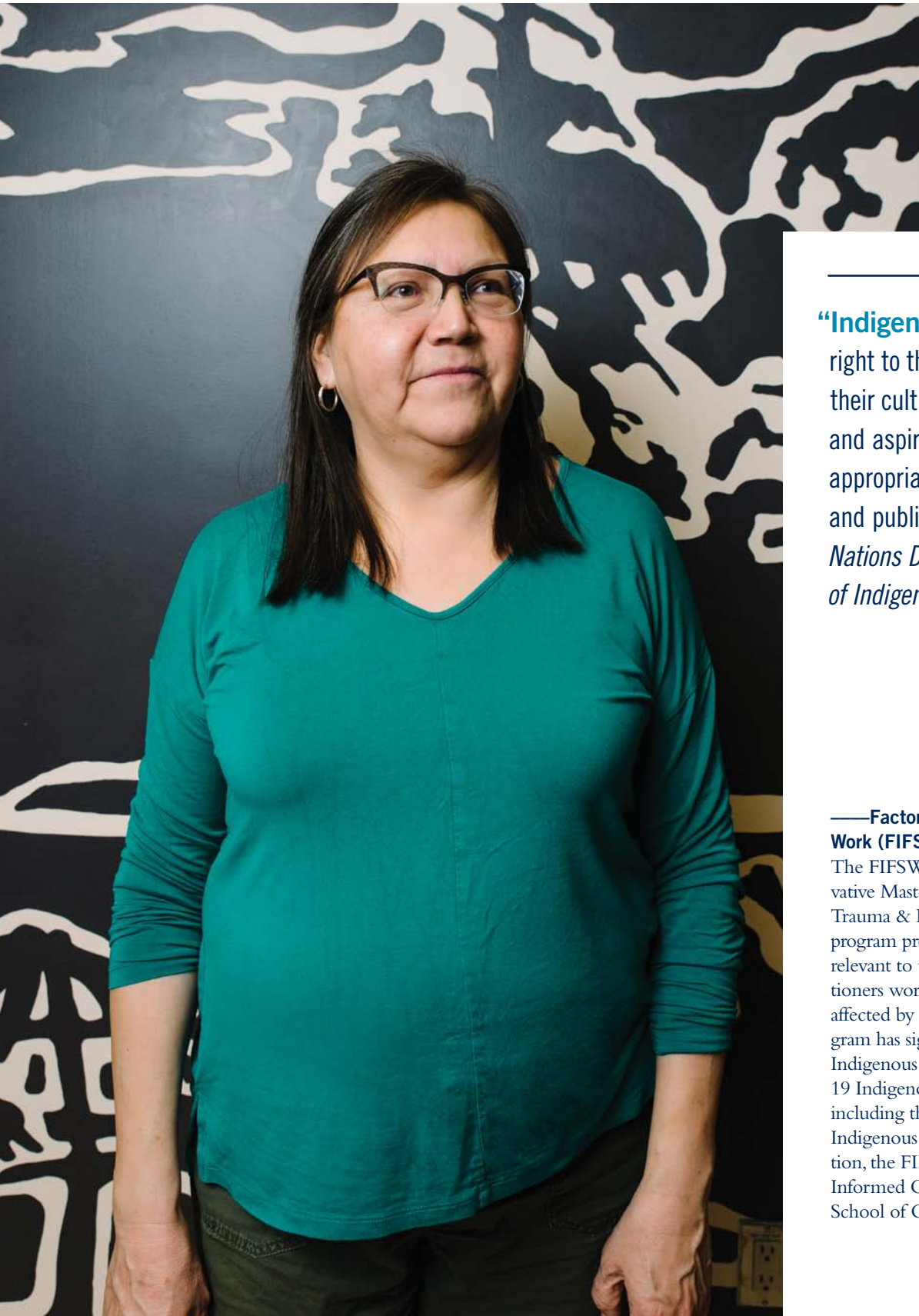
—Faculty of Arts & Science (FAS)

FAS has hired two staff as Indigenous curriculum developers and a number of Indigenous faculty members: Professor Brenda Wastasecoot, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Office of the Dean and Centre for Indigenous Studies; Professor Jill Carter, Assistant Professor, cross-appointed in the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies, and the Transitional Year Programme and Centre for Indigenous Studies; and Professor Susan Hill, Associate Professor, cross-appointed in the Department of History and Centre for Indigenous Studies, and Director of the Centre for Indigenous Studies.

Left
Professor Eliot Britton,
Assistant Professor,
Faculty of Music.

Below (left to right)
Professor Jason Bazylak,
Dean Cristina Amon, and
Elder Kim Running Bear
McDougall at a reception
following a smudging
ceremony for the Centre for
Engineering Innovation &
Entrepreneurship.
PHOTO BY ROBERTA BAKER

Indigenous Curriculum



“**Indigenous peoples** have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations, which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.” *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 15.*

—**Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work (FIFSW)**

The FIFSW recently introduced its innovative Master in Social Work, Indigenous Trauma & Resiliency program. The two-year program provides a course of study in trauma relevant to the complex needs of practitioners working with Indigenous people affected by generational trauma. The program has significant representation from the Indigenous community and partners with 19 Indigenous organizations and agencies, including the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres. In addition, the FIFSW has developed a Trauma-Informed Care Certificate program with the School of Continuing Studies (SCS).

—**John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design (FALD)**

FALD has partnered with the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and the Canadian Society of Landscape Architecture on integrating Indigenous issues (in rural and northern communities) into the core curriculum. FALD also collaborates with a number of Indigenous partners, such as the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, First Nations House, New College, the Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health, the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

—**Faculty of Arts & Science (FAS)**

FAS offers 97 courses that incorporate Indigenous content and perspectives. These courses span the Faculty’s many departments (Indigenous Studies, Anthropology, History, Religion, Political Science, and others) and include the unique Indigenous Studies course, “Indigenous Theory, Research and Methods,” which pairs students with Indigenous organizations in Toronto.

PROFESSOR BRENDA WASTASECOOT (ININEW), ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, TEACHING STREAM, OFFICE OF THE DEAN AND CENTRE FOR INDIGENOUS STUDIES

Brenda Wastasecoot (Ininew) is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Arts & Science’s Centre for Indigenous Studies, as well as a key member of the Faculty’s Decanal Working Group on Indigenous Teaching and Learning, which advises on Indigenous curriculum for the Faculty. Among Professor Wastasecoot’s priorities is working with



faculty and leadership across academic units to make their courses relevant to Indigenous students. A poet, writer, educator, mental health counsellor, and staunch advocate for Indigenous teaching and learning, Professor Wastasecoot believes strongly in the healing power of storytelling. Prior to earning her PhD in Adult Education & Community Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), Professor Wastasecoot taught at Brandon University’s First Nations and Aboriginal Counselling program and in Anishnawbe Health Toronto’s community programs.

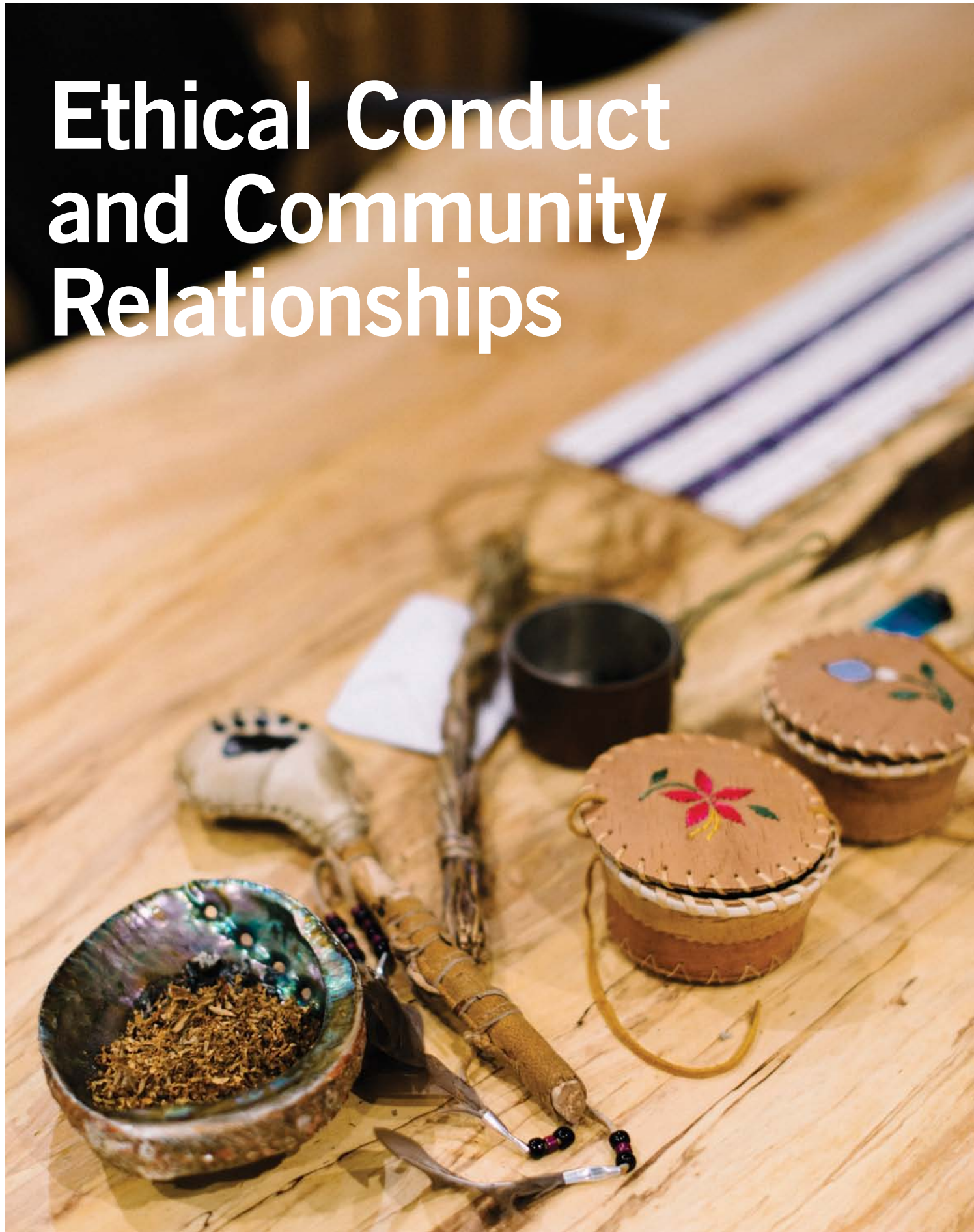
—**University of Toronto Scarborough Campus (UTSC)**

UTSC currently offers 35 courses with Indigenous content. In addition, the Office of the Vice-Principal Academic & Dean offers a variety of financial resources for Indigenous curriculum planning, including two grants: the Indigenous Course Development Grant and the Indigenous Engagement Ethics (IEE) Grant. The Office also provides funding for two sessions per year on “Indigenous Cultural Acumen and Academic Life,” and an annual curriculum development retreat for faculty.

Left
Professor Brenda Wastasecoot, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Office of the Dean and Centre for Indigenous Studies, Faculty of Arts & Science (FAS).

Above
Lindsay DuPré, Indigenous Education Liaison, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE).

Ethical Conduct and Community Relationships



The report from the TRC Steering Committee emphasized the need to invest in education on what constitutes ethical research with Indigenous peoples. This includes an investment in sufficient start-up funds for Indigenous knowledge scholars to ensure that they are able to conduct their research in an ethical manner.

—Faculty of Information (iSchool)

The iSchool was awarded a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SHRCC) Institutional Grant to support the collaboration of intellectual leaders, including 10 Indigenous faculty and museum directors from around the Great Lakes. In addition, Dean Wendy Duff proposed a Canada research chair position for the Faculty to attract a researcher on the topic of “Indigenous Cultural Heritage”; this initiative is intended to address the Calls to Action that specifically identify museums, archives, and libraries as institutions with roles to play in reconciliation.

—University of Toronto Libraries

The University of Toronto Libraries launched the Ithaka Strategies & Research (S&R) Project on Indigenous Studies Scholars. Working in partnership with 11 research universities in Canada and the United States, the project is intended to inform the needs of Indigenous Studies scholars with respect to their research outputs and to provide instruction on how to better support classes and instruction. In addition, U of T Libraries hosted a number of lectures on Indigenous research methodologies, research ethics, and supporting Indigenous researchers.

—Dalla Lana School of Public Health (DLSPH)

DLSPH holds a number of councils, including: the Elders’ Council (comprised of 10 Elders) that meets three times per year with DLSPH faculty members to review training initiatives; and the Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health (WBIH) National Aboriginal Community Advisory Council (comprised of 22 Indigenous academic and community experts from all regions of Canada) that meets twice yearly to advise on the activities of the WBIH. In addition, the DLSPH has partnerships with 30-plus national, regional, and local Indigenous community organizations and governments.

—New College

New College has partnerships with local Indigenous governments, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation to support and facilitate the Great Lakes Waterworks/13-Moon Journey. This program connects Elders with students and staff at monthly meetings at a lodge on the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation’s territory. This is made possible in part by an Indigenous Cultural Fund Grant from the Ontario Arts Council.

Convocation
Honorary Degrees
received by
Indigenous members
of the community



Beverly “Buffy” Sainte-Marie (Piapot Plains Cree) is an Academy Award-winning songwriter and musician, as well as a social activist focused on Indigenous issues.

Senator Murray Sinclair (Ojibway) is the former Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2009-2015) and a former Judge in Manitoba (1988 to 2009).

Dr. Cindy Blackstock (Gitksan) is an advocate for Indigenous children’s rights with 25+ years of social work experience, as well as being a Professor of Social Work at McGill University.

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, as well as raise awareness and educate non-Indigenous students.



The facilitators excelled at creating a sense of community conducive to creating the safe space needed for the group.”

PARTICIPANT IN AN INDIGENOUS CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING SESSION

—Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII)

The Office’s new website (indigenous.utoronto.ca) was launched this past spring to help Indigenous students navigate the myriad resources available at all three campuses – from gathering places to programs to activities to scholarships, and more in-depth resources that have been developed.

The Office has also begun piloting facilitated Indigenous Cultural Competency Training sessions (ICCT) for faculty, students, and staff. By July 2019, nearly 650 members of the U of T community will have received Indigenous cultural competency training.

—Provost’s Postdoctoral Fellowship Program

Through the coordinating efforts of the Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII) and First Nations House (FNH), U of T continues to provide specific supports for Indigenous students. This past spring, U of T announced the Provost’s Postdoctoral Fellowship program, which is aimed at hiring researchers from under-represented groups.

These fellowships will enable Indigenous and Black early career scholars to grow their research profiles, undertake academic work at the University, and strengthen the research environment with their diverse perspectives.

—Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education (KPE)

KPE’s SOAR Indigenous Youth Gathering is a March Break outreach youth program aimed at recruiting Indigenous youth across Ontario. Coordinated by Indigenous staff, the program focuses on: promoting post-secondary education and education from an Indigenous perspective; engaging youth in the community; and connecting with role models from the community and University. In 2018, 23 youth participated in the gathering of a post-secondary environment, building relationships with faculty and staff.

—U of T Annual Pow Wows and Indigenous Gatherings

In 2019, the Indigenous Studies Students’ Union (ISSU) put on its third annual pow

wow, entitled “Honouring Our Students Pow Wow.” This cultural, educational, and city-wide event is historically held at the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education’s Goldring Centre and includes a range of all-day activities including Indigenous drummers and singers, crafts, Indigenous food, and workshops for participants to learn words in Indigenous languages. That same week, the University of Toronto Scarborough hosted its first annual Indig-U-Know Indigenous conference and pow wow.

—The Bolton Camp

Nikibii Dawadinna Giigwag (Anishinaabemowin for Flooded Valley Healing) is a participatory employment training program that includes the voices of Indigenous youth and Elders/Knowledge Keepers in the planning and designing of green infrastructure. The 2018 inaugural program provided four Toronto high school youth and two University of Toronto graduate students with summer employment and an

opportunity to contribute to the revitalization of Bolton Camp, a 254-acre site 40 kilometres north of Toronto. More than 30 experts mentored the students through lectures, workshops, design reviews, guided site visits, and training in the field. The program challenged the youth to brainstorm design concepts to transform an existing cabin structure at Bolton Camp into a sustainable cabin that will provide Indigenous youth, Elders, and others with access to future programming and ceremonial space.

—Indigenous U of T Students Represent Canada at the 2018 Venice Biennale of Architecture

Nine Indigenous architecture students from across Canada were selected to attend the launch of Canada’s entry into this prestigious international event. Indigenous students from various universities, including U of T, were there to help with programming and offer insight to attendees into what it’s like to be Indigenous in Canada.

2019 SOAR Indigenous Youth Gathering participant Maggie Downer (in blue) during the lacrosse workshop at Varsity Centre.

PHOTO BY FAZLUR MALIK



Challenges

Held annually at the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education's Goldring Centre, the U of T Pow Wow is an all-day event that includes Indigenous drummers and singers, Indigenous food, and language workshops.

THE OFFICE OF INDIGENOUS INITIATIVES recently asked every University department and Faculty to advise on their challenges and how the University might best help overcome these challenges. The following are common themes discussed in these responses:

- low levels of Indigenous representation within the faculty complement;
- lack of confidence on how to proceed on initiatives, due to the general neglect in Canada of education regarding Indigenous histories, knowledges, and diversity;
- limited time and resources.

The University is taking steps to address these barriers, including hiring Indigenous faculty and staff members; recruiting Indigenous students; advancing Indigenous curriculum; promoting awareness of Indigenous issues; and seeking funding and partnerships.

Other areas that the University is being called upon to address are:

- larger, more visible, and more accessible Indigenous spaces including indoor and outdoor ceremonial spaces;

- a resource space, such as an Indigenous library;
- culturally appropriate and safe policies for traditional practices, such as smudging;
- development and refinement of effective methods of information collection and identification of Indigenous students;
- effective vehicles for communication of information about activities and other resources and initiatives that may interest Indigenous students.

Lastly, given that the University is a large and constantly evolving institution, a key overarching component to the Calls to Action is connection. Collaboration through integrated programs, cross-divisional research, and Indigenous events and activities can only stand to make U of T stronger as a place worthy of Indigenous peoples. It not only aligns the University's shared goal of seeking truth and understanding around Indigenous issues, but it keeps U of T focused on the long-term goal of healing the lingering attitudes and behaviours of the past that sought to exclude Indigenous peoples.

section 3



Next Steps



There is a lot of enthusiasm and energy around efforts to respond to the Calls to Action. It is vital to note here that Indigenous consultation and participation in such initiatives, from conception to implementation, is essential.”

section 4

—Planning and Process

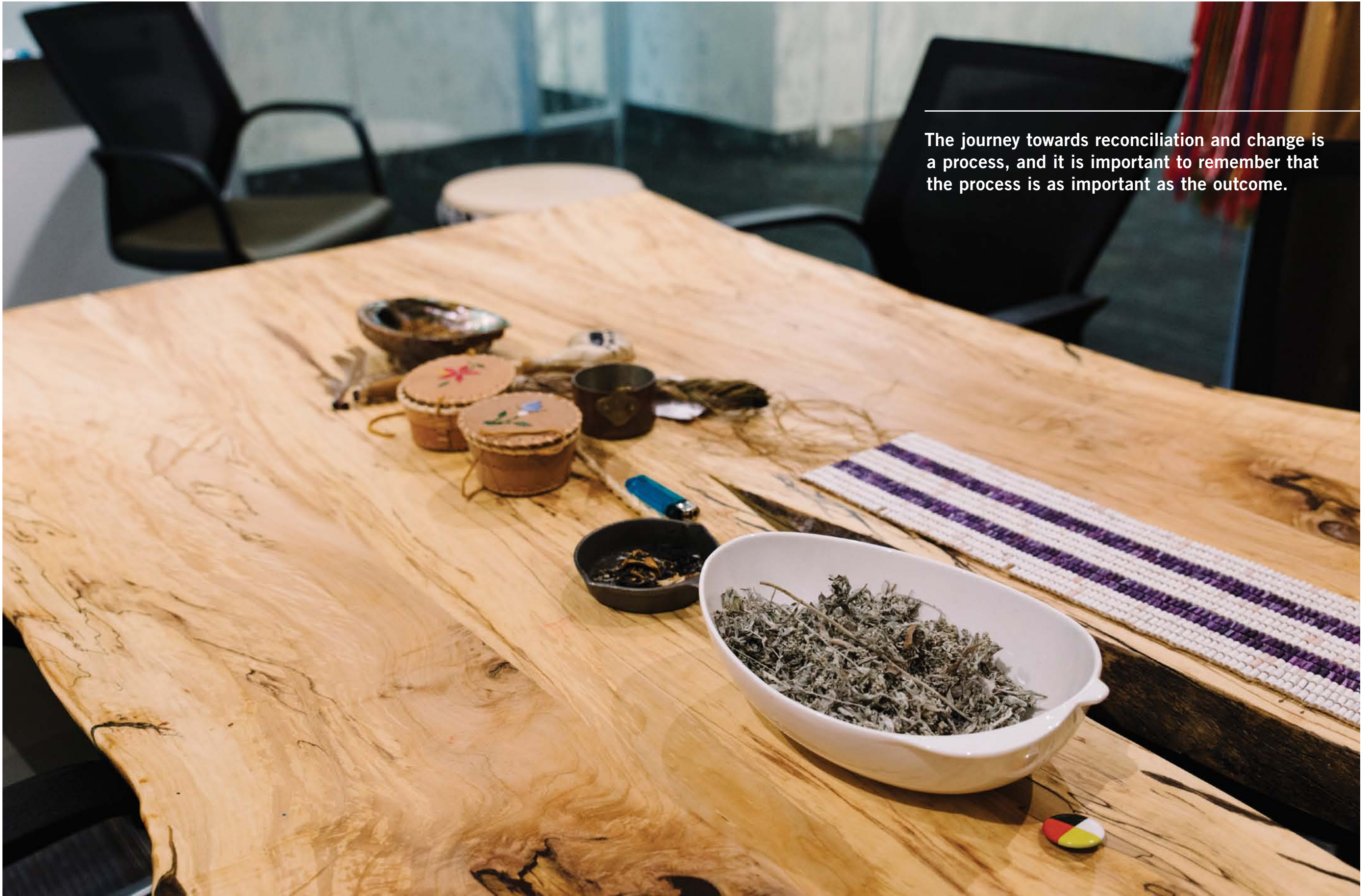
While collecting information for this report, the Office of Indigenous Initiatives was alerted to a range of impressive activities happening on each of the three campuses – all at various stages in their implementation. This report highlights only a few of the ongoing and new initiatives being developed. There is a lot of enthusiasm and energy around efforts to respond to the Calls to Action. It is vital to note here that Indigenous consultation and participation in such initiatives, from conception to implementation, is essential. These efforts should be informed by Indigenous processes, and should include Indigenous voices.

—Building Relationships

Achieving a state of true reconciliation will take time. Consultation with existing University resources including the Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII), First Nations House (FNH), and division-specific Indigenous groups and services is essential for those divisions, units, and individuals seeking to build new Indigenous relationships, or to nurture existing relationships. In surveying Faculties and other stakeholders on their views on the path forward, many excellent, thoughtful ideas on next steps have surfaced. We are committed to supporting the University community as it takes the next steps on this path together. The mission of the Office of Indigenous Initiatives is to support the types of initiatives outlined in this report. Please feel free to contact us at any time so that we can support you in your journey towards reconciliation at the University of Toronto.



Snowshoes featured on the wall at the Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health (WBIH).



The journey towards reconciliation and change is a process, and it is important to remember that the process is as important as the outcome.



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

For more information

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT indigenous.utoronto.ca

CONTACT US AT indigenous.initiatives@utoronto.ca