



UNIVERSITY OF  
TORONTO

# INDIGENOUS INITIATIVES

2022 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT





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LEFT: Riley Yesno as Eagle Feather Bearer for convocation at the University of Toronto (photo by Lisa Sakulensky).

COVER PHOTO: Graduands outside Convocation Hall during the convocation ceremony (photo by Johnny Guatto).





# Land Acknowledgement

**The Office of Indigenous Initiatives** 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 and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

First Nations House -  
Indigenous Student  
Services (photo by  
Aaron Mason).

# Foreword

## QUOTES FROM OUR SENIOR LEADERSHIP OFFICE OF INDIGENOUS INITIATIVES

With a full return to campus, 2022 brought our communities back together after many years of separation and isolation. Students were able to gather on the St. George campus (UTSG) in the newly renovated North Borden Building, which houses the Centre for Indigenous Studies and the Indigenous Student Services. At our Mississauga campus, relationships with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) were strengthened with the newly created MCFN Office, located near the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) Indigenous Centre. At the Scarborough campus (UTSC), excitement is in the air, as ground was broken for Indigenous House, a long-awaited purpose-built space for Indigenous communities to gather, access Knowledge Keepers, participate in programming, and connect with services, and for non-Indigenous communities to learn and grow.

We continue to see our numbers rise as we welcome new Indigenous students, faculty, and staff. The growing Indigenous community at U of T was able to gather together a few times throughout the year and had an especially memorable time at Hart House Farm learning from and engaging with Knowledge Keepers on the land.

Looking forward, we are excited for new Indigenous spaces, built with community guidance and intention, that will create more welcoming environments for our students and places for all of us to gather. With groundbreaking on both the Scarborough campus and the St. George campus, we are full of anticipation for what the next year will bring us.

Although there are still many challenges that we face and many obstacles that are in our path, I feel confident that U of T is committed to working alongside us as we move forward on the path of reconciliation. As I reflect on seeing the Eagle Feather, a new element added to the convocation ceremony, lead every single convocation ceremony in 2022, I am reminded that it is possible to move forward together and in a good way. Reconciliation is not the work of Indigenous Peoples, but work that we all must take part in, for it to be meaningful, impactful, and beneficial to students and beyond.

- SHANNON SIMPSON, SENIOR DIRECTOR,  
OFFICE OF INDIGENOUS INITIATIVES



Shannon Simpson,  
Senior Director, Office  
of Indigenous Initiatives  
(photo by [www.fotoreflexion.com](http://www.fotoreflexion.com)).



The University of Toronto is dedicated to advancing reconciliation across our three campuses in collaboration with Indigenous members of our community. Thanks to the excellent leadership of the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and U of T's Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community partners, important progress continues to be made. The 2022 Annual Progress Report of the Office of Indigenous Initiatives offers a thoughtful and inspiring account of this ongoing journey. Its pages share welcome news of the tangible actions and initiatives undertaken in the past year, guided by the wisdom of *Answering the Call: Wecheehetowin Final Report of the Steering Committee for the University of Toronto.*

- MERIC S. GERTLER, PRESIDENT

"The Office of Indigenous Initiatives is a vital part of the University of Toronto community, ensuring that we continue to further our progress on the Calls to Action put forward by the U of T Steering Committee on Truth and Reconciliation. Alongside this, the Office provides invaluable support in honouring, recognizing, and building upon the many accomplishments of Indigenous students, faculty, librarians, and staff at the University and beyond."

- CHERYL REGEHR, VICE-PRESIDENT & PROVOST

"I thank the hard-working team at the Office of Indigenous Initiatives for their tireless work in supporting our entire tri-campus community as we work to fulfill the University's 34 Calls to Action. Over the last year, they have met an incredible demand for their guidance and expertise while nurturing connection among Indigenous students, faculty, librarians, and staff. These efforts go far in supporting an institution where Indigenous communities see themselves – and where members of non-Indigenous communities engage more deeply with the process of reconciliation."

- HEATHER BOON, ACTING VICE-PRESIDENT, PEOPLE STRATEGY,  
EQUITY & CULTURE

## section

# 1





# Institutional Support and Guidance

In 2017, in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada's Calls to Action, University of Toronto students, staff, faculty, and Elders released *Answering the Call: Wecheehetowin Final Report of the Steering Committee for the University of Toronto*, a document created to ensure the University was in alignment with the TRC by recommending their own 34 Calls to Action that mirrored the work of the TRC, under six major themes. The Office of Indigenous Initiatives set out to support the actions and institutional changes outlined in the *Wecheehetowin Final Report*, as well as to evaluate the progress made towards truth and reconciliation by creating the Annual Progress Report, which shares that ongoing journey. This section reports on the progress achieved under the six themes identified.

**Left to Right:**  
Shannon Simpson, Senior Director, Indigenous Initiatives.  
Tee Duke, Director, Indigenous Initiatives, UTM.  
Kelly Crawford, Assistant Director, Indigenous Initiatives, UTSC.  
(photo by Stef + Ethan).

## The Office of Indigenous Initiatives: A Tri-campus Presence

The Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII) is situated within the portfolios of the Vice-President of People Strategy, Equity & Culture and the Vice-President & Provost. The mandate of the OII is to support and guide the U of T community as it continues to work towards reconciliation. The OII advises on and oversees 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. For more information, please visit <https://indigenous.utoronto.ca/>.

Operating as a tri-campus team, Shannon Simpson (Alderville First Nation) serves as the Senior Director of Indigenous Initiatives, Tee Duke (Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation, Treaty 3) serves as the Director of Indigenous Initiatives, Tee Duke (Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation, Treaty 3) serves as the Director of Indigenous Initiatives at the University of Toronto Mississauga, and Kelly Crawford >



(M'Chigeeng First Nation) serves as Assistant Director of Indigenous Initiatives at the University of Toronto Scarborough. Together, they collaborate on the development and implementation of Indigenous initiatives across the University. These roles and offices are essential to the process of building relationships among Indigenous and non-Indigenous University and community partners, implementing Indigenous culture and pedagogy throughout the institution, and continuing Indigenous initiatives offered University-wide.

**Restructuring the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, UTM**

The University of Toronto Mississauga has established its own independent Office of Indigenous Initiatives. The Office will continue UTM's efforts to meet the goals of the U of T's Truth and Reconciliation Steering Committee Report, titled *Answering the Call: Wecheehetowin*. With a commitment to strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities and expand Indigenous space within the institution, UTM's Office of Indigenous Initiatives will support students, staff, faculty, and librarians at UTM, promote inclusivity, amplify Indigenous voices, and continue towards decolonization. This restructuring saw the previous Assistant Director, Tee Duke, elevated to Director, Indigenous Initiatives, UTM.

**John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, First Peoples Leadership Advisory Group, UTSG**

The John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design brought together Elder and Traditional Teacher Dorothy Peters, community planner Trina Moyan, and educator and advocate Amos Key Jr. to establish

the First Peoples Leadership Advisory Group as part of its ongoing commitment to enhance Indigenous knowledge and perspectives within the Faculty. The Advisory Group will work closely with the Faculty's leadership to bring diverse perspectives and expertise while providing guidance to the work being done at the Faculty to advance the goals of the *Wecheehetowin Final Report*: incorporating Indigenous knowledge into curricula and research, providing supports for students, and building upon their relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

**Special Advisor on Indigenous Rematriation, UTM**

Dr. Robin R. R. Gray is UTM's first Special Advisor on Indigenous Rematriation, collaboratively created with UTM's Indigenous Table, which guides the campus in reconciliation and respectful relations. In this position, Dr. Gray works towards a respectful and reciprocal collaboration with local Indigenous communities. She is looking at the artifacts that were excavated from the Antrex Village site in Mississauga and the history of these artifacts, which are currently housed at the U of T's Anthropology department. Dr. Gray is providing guidance and planning for the safeguarding of these important artifacts that reflect Indigenous values, protocols, and laws to ensure that Indigenous people are able to reconnect with these historical artifacts – a plan the University put forth in accordance with their ongoing commitment towards truth and reconciliation.

**Special Advisor on Indigenous Initiatives, UTSC**

The University of Toronto Scarborough appointed Professor Mike DeGagné as the >

Dr. Robin Gray, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Toronto Mississauga and cross-appointed in the Graduate Faculty of Sociology and the Department of Anthropology at the University of Toronto St. George (photo by Lisa Sakulensky).





Special Advisor to the Vice-President and Principal on Indigenous Initiatives. With reconciliation at the forefront of the work, Professor DeGagné provides guidance to faculty on Indigenous curriculum and pedagogy. In addition, Professor DeGagné advises on programming, provides counsel on faculty strategies, and supports engagement between UTSC and Indigenous communities.

**John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, Decanal Advisor on Indigenous Knowledge, UTSG**

Dr. Douglas Cardinal joined the Faculty as the first Decanal Advisor on Indigenous Knowledge. Dr. Cardinal supports the Dean and Faculty’s leadership with the integration of Indigenous knowledge into curriculum and research; the recruitment of Indigenous staff, faculty, and students; as well as program development. Furthermore, Dr. Cardinal will enhance the dissemination of Indigenous perspectives in strategic planning at the Faculty, increasing Indigenous knowledge and presence to advance the Faculty’s initiatives and commitment towards truth and reconciliation.

**Temerty Faculty of Medicine: Newly Established Circles at Temerty**

In June, the Office of Indigenous Health at the Temerty Faculty of Medicine established the inaugural Indigenous Faculty Circle. This initial meeting brought together 17 Indigenous faculty, staff, and researchers who, going forward, will serve as a community of support. Meetings are intended to be held for the sharing of ideas and wise practices, as well as for the discussion of broader Faculty of Medicine Indigenous Health initiatives. In addition,

the Temerty Indigenous Medical Student Circle was established in the fall of 2022.

**Eagle Feather Bearer Introduced to U of T Convocation**

As a symbol of U of T’s commitment to reconciliation, the unprecedented inclusion of the role of Eagle Feather Bearer has been introduced to convocation. The Chancellor’s procession is now led by the ceremonial Eagle Feather Bearer, an Indigenous member of the U of T community, as a sign of the University’s respect for and commitment to the inclusion of Indigenous culture. Often described as being sacred due to the eagle flying closest to the Creator, the eagle feather also symbolizes honour, respect, courage, strength, and wisdom in many Indigenous cultures, including in several of the local Indigenous communities. The addition of the Eagle Feather Bearer has increased Indigenous visibility at U of T and is a significant acknowledgement of the culture and history of Indigenous Peoples in and around the University of Toronto.

**The University of Toronto Honorary Doctorate, UTSG**

During the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design spring convocation, an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree was awarded to Douglas Cardinal, a renowned Indigenous architect who has a long-time commitment to sustainable designs and creating iconic buildings for the nation. Dr. Cardinal previously held the Frank O. Gehry Chair at the Faculty in 2020-21, and currently continues to work within the Faculty as the Decanal Advisor on Indigenous Knowledge.

Eagle feather presented to the University during the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation at Hart House, University of Toronto St. George campus (photo by Polina Teif).





# Indigenous Spaces

**Creating Indigenous spaces** across all three campuses at the University of Toronto has helped serve a symbolic role, signifying that Indigenous Peoples are present on this land and at the University through the creation of welcoming environments for Indigenous staff, students, and faculty members – spaces that support the increasing presence of Indigenous culture on all three campuses, forming stronger ties for community, contributing to building relationships, and reminding the community of the rich Indigenous history on the land where the University sits. This year saw further commitment and prioritization of the planning and establishment of new Indigenous spaces.



## Renovations at First Nations House and Centre for Indigenous Studies, UTSC

First Nations House Indigenous Student Services (FNH-ISS) and the Centre for Indigenous Studies (CIS) have undergone major renovations in the North Borden Building, which were completed in early 2022. The FNH-ISS Resource Centre has been relocated on the third floor, and the main floor features an events/tutorial space that is shared between CIS and FNH-ISS, as well as dedicated office space for the Indigenous Students' Association and the Indigenous Studies Students' Union. These renovations offer more accessible areas for events and gatherings, improved separate workspaces, updated technology, and displays of Indigenous artwork throughout.

## Indigenous Garden, UTSC

The University of Toronto Scarborough is home to an Indigenous garden which provides opportunities for learning, provides space to gather, and is home to traditional medicines and food. The garden has grown three of the sacred medicines – sweetgrass, semaa (tobacco), and sage. In addition to medicines, the garden is also home to a Three Sisters Garden. This year also saw the addition of a medicine wheel garden which includes four raised beds, each one with companion plants that represent the teaching on the Anishinaabe medicine wheel. The garden responds to a number of strategic priorities in providing students with experiential, holistic learning opportunities; increasing collaborations and facilitating the co-creation of knowledge; and fostering an environment where Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and communities feel welcomed and engaged.

## Tipi Raising, UTM

During the fall, the University of Toronto Mississauga hosted a Student Meet and Greet and a Tipi raising event, which allowed students and community members to take part in the traditional practice that also contributes to the efforts made by UTM to create Indigenous spaces on campus. In collaboration with the University's First Nations House, the Tipi was placed in front of the Maanjiwe nendamowinan building and will stay until April 2023. This project allows for the community to come together in a traditional space for teachings, ceremonies, and other events and programming, and enables the Indigenous community to have more access to cultural practices. It also provides learning opportunities for students and the community while increasing Indigenous visibility on campus. >

**Above:** Students, staff, and faculty gather at the UTM Tipi raising (photo by Nicholas Iwanyslyn).

**Left:** First Nations House Indigenous Student Services (FNH-ISS).





**Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation Office Opening, UTM**

The University of Toronto Mississauga has opened a new office space for the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN), located in the Maanjiwe nendamowinan building. The land where the building sits is the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Huron-Wendat, and the Seneca. This milestone will contribute to the ongoing respectful relationship between the MCFN and the University, promoting collaboration and continued reciprocal relations, while also increasing Indigenous culture and practices within the institution. The Office includes a window mural

called Kiinwin Dabaadjmowin, “Our Story,” created by Indigenous artists Philip Cote and Tracey Anthony, which illustrates the creation story of the Anishinaabe people. The MCFN Office was awarded the Modern Heritage Award at the 2022 Heritage Mississauga Awards – an award that highlights urban innovation and growth and is granted to projects that work towards preserving and protecting local heritage.

**Opening of Indigenous Gathering Space, UTM**

The UTM Office of Indigenous Initiatives worked closely with the Facilities, Management, and Planning team on campus to open

the UTM Indigenous Gathering Space. Located on the sixth floor of the Maanjiwe nendamowinan building, the Indigenous Gathering Space represents the UTM Indigenous Centre – a space where Indigenous students, staff, and faculty have access to a culturally safe environment. The space increases Indigenous presence on campus while providing Indigenous UTM community members an additional area where they have access to and may use traditional medicines within the facilities; a gathering space for various programming, workshops, and events; and a collaborative space for partnerships and research while working with the local Indigenous community.

**Indigenous Students Tell Their Stories Through Art; Collaborative Mural Creation, UTSC**

In October, the Department of Historical and Cultural Studies in collaboration with the Academic Advising & Career Centre, coordinated the creation of the new art mural, Indigenous Students Tell Their Stories Through Art. This collaborative mural project included work from Indigenous undergraduate students from UTSC, led by local artist Mo Thunder. The creation of the mural heightens the Indigenous presence on campus and promotes learning opportunities for the local UTSC community.

Community participates in ‘Every Child Matters’ Collaborative Mural at UTSC (photo by Brittney Jaikaran).



# Indigenous Faculty and Staff

**The recruitment and hiring of Indigenous faculty** and staff are fundamental to the ongoing Indigenizing of the institution, increasing Indigenous presence on campus, and fostering culturally safe environments where students and staff are able to flourish. While providing Indigenous perspectives and historical methodologies and epistemologies, they are able to offer supports to Indigenous students and enhance curricular developments University-wide.

## **Educational Developer: Indigenous Pedagogies & Decolonization, UTM**

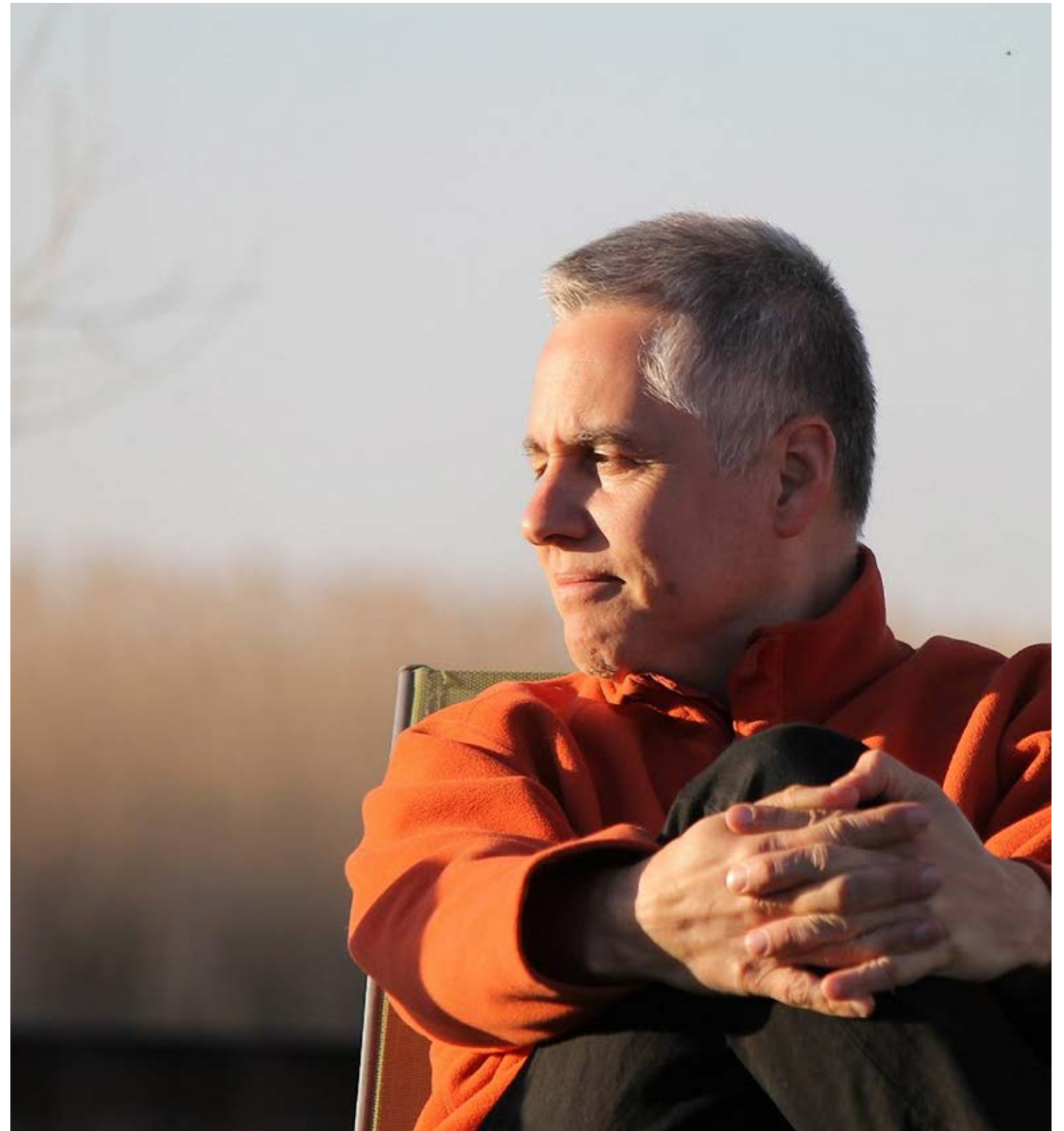
This year UTM introduced the new role of Educational Developer: Indigenous Pedagogies & Decolonization – a position created to support and promote the creation and integration of Indigenous curriculum while advancing decolonial practices at UTM.

## **Dr. John Borrows (Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation), Professor and Loveland Chair, Faculty of Law**

John Borrows, B.A., M.A., J.D., LL.M. (Toronto), Ph.D. (Osgoode Hall Law School), LL.D. (Hons., Dalhousie, York, SFU, Queen's & Law Society of Ontario), D.H.L., (Toronto), F.R.S.C., O.C., is the Loveland Chair in Indigenous Law at the University of Toronto Law School. His publications

include *Recovering Canada: The Resurgence of Indigenous Law* (Donald Smiley Award best book in Canadian Political Science, 2002), *Canada's Indigenous Constitution* (Canadian Law and Society Best Book Award 2011), *Drawing Out Law: A Spirit's Guide* (2010), *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism* (Donald Smiley Award best book in Canadian Political Science, 2016), *The Right Relationship* (with Michael Coyle, ed.), *Resurgence and Reconciliation* (with Michael Asch, Jim Tully, eds.), and *Law's Indigenous Ethics* (2020 Best Subsequent Book Award from Native American and Indigenous Studies Association, 2020 W. Wes Pue Best Book Award from the Canadian Law and Society Association). He is the 2017 Killam Prize winner in Social Sciences and the 2019 Molson Prize Winner from the Canada Council for the Arts, the >

Dr. John Borrows  
(photo by Trudo Lemmens).







**Top:** Ryan Giroux  
(photo by Graham Law).

**Above:** Chadwick Cowie  
(photo by Christian Cho).

**Left:** Shane Kelsey  
(photo by Shane Russell).



2020 Governor General’s Innovation Award, and the 2021 Canadian Bar Association President’s Award winner. He was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2020. John is a member of the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation in Ontario.

**Ryan Giroux (Métis Nation of Alberta), Postgraduate Medical Education Indigenous Health Lead, Temerty Faculty of Medicine**

Dr. Ryan Giroux is a General Pediatrician working at St. Michael’s Hospital and the Inner-City Health Associates in Toronto. He is Métis from the Métis Nation of Alberta and of mixed settler heritage. He is an Indigenous Educator at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, where he focuses on accreditation, and is the Temerty Faculty of Medicine’s Postgraduate Medical Education Indigenous Health Lead. He grew up on Treaty 6 and Treaty 8 territories in rural Alberta prior to completing a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology in Edmonton, and completed medical school and his Pediatrics residency at the University of Toronto. His interests include Indigenous child health, refugee and newcomer health, 2SLGBTQ+ health, and medical education.

**Chadwick Cowie (Pamitaashkodeyong, Hiawatha First Nation), Department of Political Science**

Chadwick (Chad) Cowie is of Michi-Saagiig Nishnaabeg and European lineage. Chad grew up in the Michi-Saagiig Nishnaabeg community of Pamitaashkodeyong (also referred to as Hiawatha First Nation by the Canadian State). Chad is also of the Atik (Caribou) dotem (clan). Chad attended Fanshawe College for his Liberal Arts and Science Diploma, then studied Political Science and First Nations Studies at Western University in London, Ontario, and worked as a Researcher and Policy Analyst for the Chiefs of Ontario. Afterwards, Chad attended the University of Manitoba, where he received his Master of Arts (MA) in Political Studies (2013). Currently, Chad is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the Univer-

sity of Toronto (Scarborough and St. George campuses) and a Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science at the University of Alberta. Chad’s areas of focus include Indigenous, Canadian, and comparative politics. In addition to his work with the University of Toronto and his education at the University of Alberta, Chad is the Researcher for the Michi-Saagiig Nishnaabeg Nation (which currently comprises six communities: Alderville, Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Mississaugas of the Credit, Mississaugi, and Mississaugas of Scugog).

**Shane Kelsey, Indigenous Engagement Coordinator, Hart House**

Shane Kelsey has an extensive background of work within the Indigenous community, which started when he was a youth. He spent many years of his childhood and youth partaking in traditional and cultural events and ceremonies and volunteering at Indigenous Friendship Centres. Eventually, he moved on to working for the Indigenous homeless shelter, Projets Autochtones du Québec, for seven years as a frontline worker. During this time, he would volunteer his free time to run cultural workshops and chaperone youth-led cross-country exchanges for Canadian Roots Exchange in partnership with other Indigenous youth and university groups. Shane rediscovered a passion for the arts and began creating and performing as a hip hop artist. He moved to Toronto to begin his journey with education, starting with the Transitional Year Programme at U of T. He has since begun an undergraduate program at the University of Toronto, where he is continuing his passion for the arts by studying Cinema, Drama and Performance, and Indigenous Studies. He co-founded an Indigenous apparel brand known as Neechi By Nature, where he designs from an Indigenous influence and perspective; he had the opportunity to design and make the First Nations House Indigenous Grad Scarves. Before starting his position at Hart House, he was a casual employee for First Nations House helping with various tasks, such as Indigenous Education Week programming, content, facilitation, and more.





**Left to Right:**  
 Andrew Bomberry,  
 Special Projects Officer,  
 Indigenous Curriculum &  
 Education, OII.  
 Stephanie Waterman,  
 Academic Advisor on  
 Indigenous Curriculum  
 and Education; Associate  
 Professor, Leadership,  
 Higher & Adult Education  
 at OISE.  
 (photo by Stef & Ethan).

# Indigenous Curriculum

**The University of Toronto continues** to create space for and integrate Indigenous curriculum, epistemologies, and pedagogies across all three campuses. The University maintains the perspective that Indigenous thought and philosophies are equal to other disciplines as sources of knowledge and promotes foundational changes to curricula that reflect Indigenous knowledge systems and protocols.

**This year, there were a number of** new courses added that either focus on Indigenous content or include it as a major component.

**Some of the new courses containing Indigenous content are:**

- Department of Anthropology: Professor Lindsay M. Montgomery has added a new course on Indigenous Archaeologies.
- Victoria College Education and Society Program: A new course offering as of 2022 is EDS358H1: Residential Schools and Education in Canada.
- Toronto School of Theology – Emmanuel College: Through EMT2155: Engaging the Spirit: Indigenous Theological Worldviews.
- Dalla Lana School of Public Health: A new course was added called CHL5525H: Indigenous Social Determinants of Health.
- The School of Public Health also added HMB226H1: Indigenous Holistic Health.

**Curriculum Review, UTSC**

The University of Toronto Scarborough conducted a campus-wide curriculum review during the 2022 year. The review highlighted and focused on Indigenous and Black knowledges, racialized perspectives, and international and intercultural perspectives. A working circle was established for the review process, which consisted of staff, faculty, students, and community members. The working circle was also supported by Elder Josh Eshkawkogan and by educational advisor and

consultant and treaty partner Giidaakunadaad (Nancy) Rowe. The review led to the creation of the *Report of the UTSC Campus Curriculum Review*, a document outlining the assessment of curriculum that resulted in 56 recommended actions to promote foundational change. The report suggested transformative approaches to ensure programming at UTSC reflects the diversity of students and prioritizes historical pedagogies and epistemologies. The working circle continues to work towards the long-term implementation of the recommended actions.

**Centre for Indigenous Studies – Change in Status**

As of July 1, 2022, the Centre for Indigenous Studies (CIS) has had its status changed from an EDU:B to an EDU:A. This significant change allows CIS to recruit Indigenous Studies scholars into a unit that best fits their area of expertise. It furthermore enables CIS to pursue and foster novel interdisciplinary directions in teaching and research, increases its nimbleness in responding to contemporary research directions in Indigenous Studies, and ensures its ability to cultivate curriculum in ways that are consistent with developments in the field of Indigenous Studies. The change supports the University of Toronto Calls to Action, which respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), and current academic priorities of the Faculty of Arts & Science, including the 2020-2025 Arts & Science Academic Plan.



# Ethical Conduct and Community Relationships

**The Wecheehetowin Final Report's Calls to Action** emphasize the importance of investing in education to establish ethical research practices while promoting respectful relationships with Indigenous Peoples.



The Great Lakes Research Alliance for the Study of Aboriginal Arts & Cultures (GRASAC) researchers.

## Ziibiing Lab: An International Indigenous Politics Collaboratory, UTSG

In October 2022, Professor Uahikea Maile launched the Ziibiing Lab, a space for community-based, collaborative research with an international outlook and vision in the Department of Political Science at the Faculty of Arts & Science. The space was named using Anishinaabemowin, referencing Taddle Creek, a stream once believed to be lost to development, but discovered to still exist today on the UTSG campus. A governing council consisting of nine Indigenous members of the Faculty of Arts & Science oversee the Ziibiing Lab agenda and development. The Lab has an interdisciplinary, collaborative approach to research that is concerned not only with local practices but also with transnational critical studies of Indigenous politics and praxis.

## Relations on the Land: A Hub for Community Engaged Research and Teaching with Indigenous Partners

With support from the Postsecondary Education Fund for Aboriginal Learners (PEFAL) and the Luce Foundation, Relations on the Land is a new initiative established to create a research hub beginning with four Arts & Science-based projects. These projects, including First Story Toronto, the Great Lakes Research Alliance for the Study of Aboriginal Arts and Cultures (GRASAC), the Mounds Research Collective, and Haude-

nosaunee Story Telling Circles at Six Nations of the Grand River, all work with Indigenous partners and focus on the intersection of spiritualities, land, and material culture. By joining together as a research hub, they plan to foster new opportunities to share knowledge, challenges, and new ideas in ways that help the projects flourish and support transformations of institutional culture at the Faculty of Arts & Science.

## Itzaj Language Revitalization

During the summer of 2022, Dr. Pedro Mateo Pedro began collaborating with the Itzaj Linguistic Community of the Academy of Mayan Languages of Guatemala. The work focuses on the revitalization of Itzaj through the implementation of the Oxlajuj Aj teaching method, which consists of training native speakers of Itzaj to teach the Mayan language as a second language and to develop a pedagogical grammar. With support from the Connaught Fund and the Work Study Program, Dr. Mateo Pedro was able to hire undergraduate students to support the development of pedagogical grammar of the endangered Mayan language, Itzaj. This work also provides students an opportunity to learn more about the language revitalization and community in Guatemala. At the launch of the project there were 50+ participants learning to speak the language through the newly introduced Oxlajuj Aj method and the developed pedagogical grammar.



# Indigenous Students and Indigenous Co-Curricular Education

The University of Toronto continues to work towards Indigenous recruitment and the creation of an environment where current and future Indigenous students can thrive. The prioritization of Indigenous supports and cultural activities leads to the fulfillment of students in their educational journey by helping them feel connected to community, ensuring they have access to cultural supports, and encouraging them to feel acknowledged along the way. In addition, these initiatives raise awareness and provide learning opportunities for non-Indigenous students.

## Orange Shirt Day/National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Tri-Campus

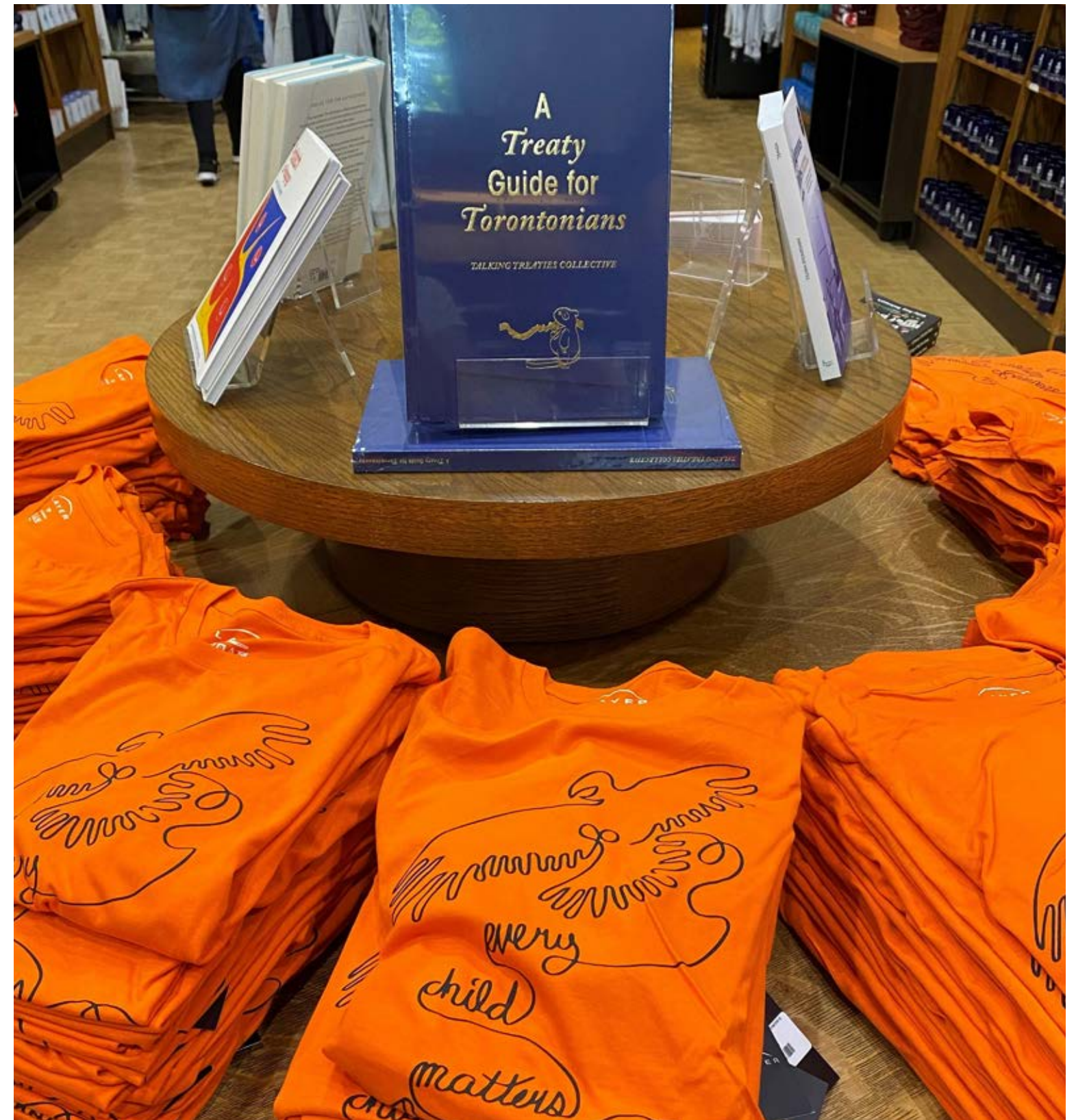
The University of Toronto organized various events and initiatives across all three campuses in recognition of Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation:

- The University hosted an institution-wide event that was organized and supported by the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, Hart House, the Faculty of Arts & Science, the Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education, Woodsworth College, UTM Indigenous Centre, and First Nations House, and was located in the Great Hall at Hart House. Professor Brenda Wastasecoot provided the keynote address: “The Nikis Story is the Story of Canada: Reflecting on the Impacts

of the Indian Residential Schools.”

- The Department of Anthropology of the Faculty of Arts & Science hosted a Read-In of *They Called Me Number One*, a memoir by Xat’sull Chief Bev Sellars. To put the words and experiences of residential school survivors at the centre of Orange Shirt Day, faculty, staff, and undergraduate and graduate students took turns each reading aloud Bev Sellars’ work, which describes her childhood experiences in a church-run residential school.
- The Department of Anthropology of the Faculty of Arts & Science also purchased 240 orange t-shirts and distributed them to staff, faculty, and undergraduate and graduate students. →

Orange Shirt Day at the U of T Bookstore (photo by Leanne Grosbeck).







Indigenous staff, faculty, librarian, and student gathering at Hart House Farm, Fall 2022.

- Victoria University hosted the 6th Annual Campus (Re)Conciliations Conference: “The Truth Is Not Yet Fully Told” with keynote speakers’ Phyllis Webstad and Dr. Mike DeGagné. Victoria University also hosted a speakers panel with Indigenous faith leaders from different Christian traditions who spoke about the role and impact of apologies offered by the churches to residential school survivors.
- In September, the Temerty Faculty of Medicine hosted a two-part Orange Shirt Day beading workshop.
- The University of Toronto Bookstore, in partnership with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, arranged for a limited supply of orange shirts to be available in bookstores on all three campuses. Proceeds were donated to a local Indigenous organization.

**Virtual Tour of the Mohawk Institute Indian Residential School, the Woodlands Cultural Centre**

In the spring, the Faculty of Arts & Science partnered with three Indigenous-led orga-

nizations to offer staff, faculty, and alumni opportunities to learn more about Indigenous Peoples’ experiences in residential schools. The Secwempec Museum and Cultural Heritage Centre, the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre (SRSC) at Algoma University, and the Woodlands Cultural Centre provided virtual “tours” and presentations of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School, Shingwauk Residential School, and the Mohawk Institute Residential School respectively. Though each presentation was unique, all were directed by the voices and input of survivors and made connections to the wider ideological and policy context that made these “schools” sites of both colonial violence and Indigenous resistance.

**Hosting of the International Workshop on Birchbark, UTM**

In October, Professor Alexandra Gillespie, Vice-President & Principal, University of Toronto Mississauga, hosted a global workshop focused on birchbark that highlighted the material’s significance and multiple uses in



Debezdaguzh Singers at UTM’s Drum Social to kick off National Indigenous History Month (photo by Nicholas Iwanyszyn).

arts, crafting, building, and writing materials. During this three-day workshop, participants discussed how this strong, water-resistant material has been used throughout history by Indigenous communities and discussed the meanings and messages birchbark has carried across the globe. In addition, discussions centred around the modern research conducted on birchbark, including important artifacts and birchbark knowledge objects.

**Indigenous Community Gathering, Hart House Farm**

The Orange Shirt Day Indigenous Community Gathering at Hart House Farm on October 3, 2022 was made possible by divisional collaboration. Supported by Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers, this tri-campus event for Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and librarians highlighted the importance of community care in relation to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation – a time when Indigenous Peoples are often called upon to build awareness and educate peers about the intergenerational

impacts of residential schools. Given these dynamics, Indigenous students, staff, and faculty need time and space to maintain our relations with one another, consistent with Call to Action #7, which states: “The Provost’s Office should seek out additional ways to encourage and facilitate networking opportunities for Indigenous faculty and Indigenous staff”. By doing so, Indigenous students, faculty, and staff may continue to be effective in undertaking the important work of reconciliation and decolonization.

**Drum Social, UTM**

The University of Toronto Mississauga kicked off National Indigenous History Month by hosting a Drum Social held at UTM’s Maanjiwe nendamowinan. The social included performances of intertribal music as well as welcoming UTM community members to gather and celebrate Indigenous culture and heritage, acknowledging historical challenges but also recognizing the resilience and strength of Indigenous communities throughout history.



# Challenges

As part of the University's responsibilities to accountability and the process of evaluating progress made towards implementing the 34 Calls to Action presented in the *Wecheehetowin Final Report*, the Office of Indigenous Initiatives requested feedback from U of T departments, offices, centres, and Faculties about challenges experienced by Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and librarians across all three campuses. In addition, they were asked what supports were needed to overcome these challenges in the future. Notable themes that emerged from the responses are as follows:

- Lack of capacity and Indigenous faculty at the University in comparison to the demand for Indigenous expertise and presence for ongoing and upcoming projects and initiatives;
- High demand for Indigenous presence can cause an increased burden for the limited number of existing Indigenous staff, students, faculty, and librarians;
- Sustainable funding needed to realize ongoing, long-term commitments to initiatives and goals;
- Lack of administrative infrastructure to support projects;
- The COVID-19 pandemic restricted (and continues to restrict) the opportunities to interact, establish, or build stronger relationships with Indigenous communities, as well as stopped or limited progress on existing initiatives;
- Lack of Indigenous presence or representation in various Faculties/departments;
- Frequently insufficient knowledge or understanding of Indigenous education or processes associated with Indigenous practices by members of the non-Indigenous community who are tasked with coordinating or collaborating on different programs and events;
- Inadequate information surrounding the number of Indigenous students at the University, as well as not having access to existing information to inform programming, services, and other various supports;
- Increased need for physical Indigenous space on campus for staff and students to use for culturally safe programming, land-based education opportunities, and gathering spots. Currently there are not enough spaces available and proposed spaces often have long planning phases and construction periods; and
- The persistent belief that Indigenous systems and approaches are unequal to academic systems and approaches.

The University is committed to addressing these barriers and to making strides towards foundational changes in several ways, including the ongoing hiring of Indigenous faculty and staff members; recruiting Indigenous students; advancing the dissemination of Indigenous culture, history, and pedagogies into curriculum and strategic developments; increasing Indigenous presence University-wide; promoting awareness of Indigenous issues; seeking funding and resources to support goals and initiatives; and fostering collaborative relationships with Indigenous communities.





# Next Steps, Looking Forward

**U of T remains committed** to its role in advancing reconciliation across our three campuses in ways that are relevant to and collaborative with Indigenous members of the U of T community and the host nations. As the Office of Indigenous Initiatives continues to grow, so will its impact on the U of T community in advancing Indigenous issues with transparency, accountability, and proficiency.



## Indigenous Identity Verification Process

The Office of Indigenous Initiatives at the University of Toronto will be launching a new Indigenous-led process of verifying Indigenous identity for designated opportunities, resources, employment, and admissions pathways by University students, staff, librarians, and faculty. This process will be guided by the Indigenous Identity Verification Committee comprising Indigenous staff, faculty, students, and Knowledge Keepers, who will advise on these issues as well as explore various processes to consult with the Indigenous University community on best practices moving forward.

## Indigenous House Construction, UTSC

Expected to be completed in 2024, Indigenous House will bring a purpose-built Indigenous building and outdoor space to the Scarborough campus. Indigenous House will offer a community for Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and librarians as well as learning opportunities for non-Indigenous communities. There will be space for learning, ceremony, and socializing, and it will support Indigenous recruitment efforts, curriculum building, and Indigenous research endeavours.

## Student Designed Artwork: Orange Shirt Day T-Shirt

The Office of Indigenous Initiatives, in partnership with the University of Toronto Bookstore, will invite Indigenous students to submit their artwork for the 2023 Orange Shirt Day Design Contest. Shirts will be made available in the University bookstores across the three campuses for Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

## NAISA 2023 Tkaronto Conference

The University of Toronto will be hosting the annual Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) conference in May 2023. NAISA is an association comprising interdisciplinary scholars working in the field of Native American and Indigenous studies. The Association hosts an annual academic conference that welcomes students, faculty, scholars, Elders, and independent professionals to gather and foster existing relations, and provides opportunities to establish connections and build new relations. For more information, please visit <https://www.naisa2023.ca/>.

## Office of Indigenous Initiatives: Expansion of Offerings for Cultural Competency Training

The Office of Indigenous Initiatives is working on the expansion of course trainings available to staff and students that will be made available in 2023. The first addition will be the new training course, *Treaties: Foundational Documents to the Settlement of Canada*, which aims to promote more in-depth understanding of these foundational documents and their importance in the settlement of Canada. The other addition is the launching of an Indigenous book club, which examines literature that highlights the top-down misunderstanding in Canada of what colonialism is and its impacts on the colonized. The book club will also open dialogue on the perpetuation of colonial attitudes that eliminate Indigenous Peoples' claims to the land.

## Indigenous Student Advisory Circle, Office of Indigenous Initiatives

In 2023 the Office of Indigenous Initiatives will be establishing the Indigenous Student Advisory Circle. The purpose of the Student Advisory Circle is to provide advice and feedback to the Senior Director of the Office of Indigenous Initiatives on

a variety of strategic initiatives across the institution. These may include research, curriculum, space, student engagement, and community relationships.

## Ziibiing (Formerly the Indigenous Landscape at Taddle Creek Project)

In response to the *Wecheehetowin Final Report's* Calls to Action, the University of Toronto consulted with Indigenous stakeholders, U of T community members, and local Indigenous communities on the creation of Ziibiing (formerly the Indigenous Landscape at Taddle Creek). This highly anticipated Indigenous space is located in the heart of the St. George campus and will include designs that showcase Indigenous culture and history. It will also include storytelling on cultural markers located at the gateways of the space that provides more information on the Indigenous history of the land and Taddle Creek, which was known to be called "Ziibiing," meaning "river" in Anishinaabemowin. It will also feature the planting of Indigenous medicines and trees and the building of a gathering and teaching space, a permanent space where community can come together, partake in cultural activities, learn, and share knowledge. Construction of the space has commenced and will be completed in 2023.

Students at the First Nations House Teaching Lodge (photo by Aaron Mason).

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**LEFT:** Staff and Students raise the First Nations House Teaching Lodge (photo by Aaron Mason).

**BACK COVER:** UTM Tipi raising event (photo by Nicholas Iwanyshyn).





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For more information

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