

INDIGENOUS INITIATIVES



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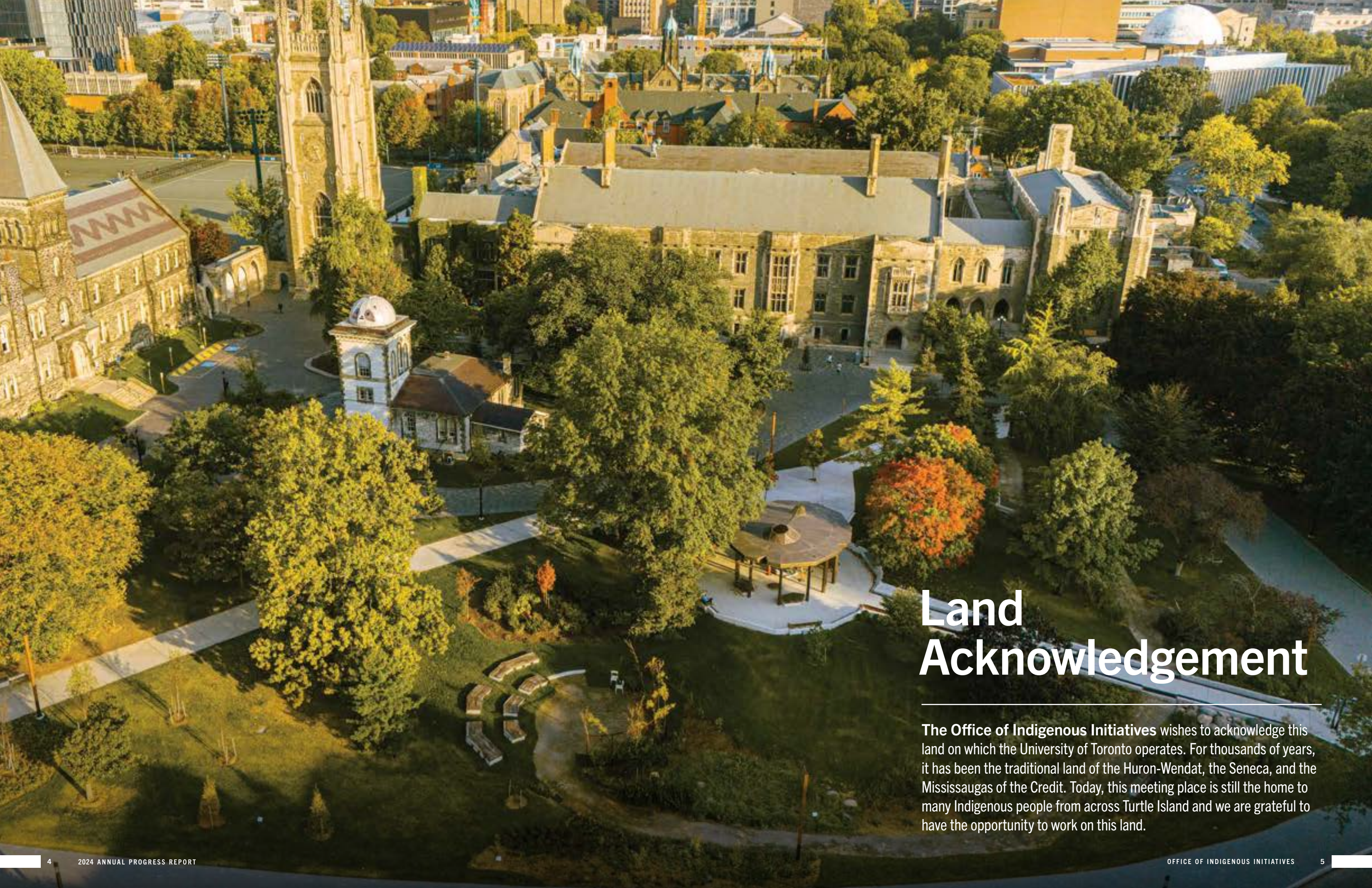
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In 2017, in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada's Calls to Action, University of Toronto (U of T) students, staff, faculty, and Elders released *Answering the Call: Wecheehetowin Final Report of the Steering Committee for the University of Toronto*, a document created to ensure the University was in alignment with the TRC by recommending their own Calls to Action. The U of T report contained 34 Calls to Action, under six major themes. The Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII) 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. The report highlights progress achieved under the six themes identified.

ON THIS PAGE: Members of the Manitou Mkwā Singers, of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (photo by Nick Iwanushyn)

COVER PHOTO: Lindy Kinoshameg (photo by Stef + Ethan)

NEXT SPREAD: Ziibiing (photo by David Lee)



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.

Foreword

This year, Indigenous presence continued to increase across our three campuses. With an enhanced commitment to hold and support Indigenous ceremonies across our campuses, we saw both indoor and outdoor spaces become more welcoming for the Indigenous community at the University of Toronto. We celebrated the official opening of Ziibiing, a central Indigenous outdoor space for teaching, learning, ceremonies, and gathering. It has filled a gap on our St. George campus and is now enjoyed by all members of the U of T community.

“AS THE TRI-CAMPUS Indigenous community grows collectively, we are reminded of the importance of structural change, deep commitment, and a shifting of priorities. Reconciliation is everyone’s work and the more knowledge and understanding we all have, the more we can all benefit and flourish.

We look forward to opening new Indigenous spaces on all three campuses, welcoming new Indigenous faces on our teams, and continuing to remove barriers for Indigenous students so that they can thrive and fully participate in all U of T has to offer.

With much anticipation, I look forward to what we as a community can achieve, and I am honoured to work alongside such an incredible group of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, staff, students, faculty, and librarians at the University.”

**- SHANNON SIMPSON, SENIOR DIRECTOR,
OFFICE OF INDIGENOUS INITIATIVES**



Shannon Simpson, Senior Director,
Office of Indigenous Initiatives (photo by
©The City of Toronto).



On behalf of the University of Toronto, I would like to reiterate our profound commitment as an institution to the ongoing work of truth and reconciliation. I thank the faculty, librarians, staff, students, alumni, and friends across our three campuses, whose dedication to that work is reflected in this report. And I thank the Indigenous members and friends of the U of T community for their vital contributions in every aspect of our mission of learning, discovery, and innovation. Let me also take this opportunity to express our collective gratitude to the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and the Elders Circle for their outstanding leadership and service.”

- MERIC S. GERTLER, PRESIDENT

“The Office of Indigenous Initiatives has made tremendous progress in creating a more welcoming and inclusive environment for Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and librarians on our campuses. It has also been instrumental in helping non-Indigenous community members gain invaluable knowledge of the history, presence, and value of Indigenous contributions to the University of Toronto and the land on which we teach and learn. I have deep gratitude to the OII for this incredibly important work.”

- TREVOR YOUNG, VICE-PRESIDENT & PROVOST

“Each year, the Annual Progress Report offers the U of T community cause for celebration, as new Indigenous employees join our institution; new Indigenous spaces are introduced to our campuses; and new research, programming, and curricula affirm the importance of Indigenous knowledge and traditions. The Report additionally offers a clear vision of the journey ahead and commitment required to fulfill all 34 Calls to Action. I urge non-Indigenous members of the community to recognize their role in addressing these areas with care and intention.”

**- KELLY HANNAH-MOFFAT, VICE-PRESIDENT, PEOPLE STRATEGY,
EQUITY & CULTURE**



2024 UTM All Nations
Powwow (photo by Nick
Iwanyshyn).

section

2

Institutional Support and Guidance

U of T's senior leadership facilitate ongoing conversations regarding the priorities outlined in *Answering the Call: Wecheehetowin Final Report of the Steering Committee for the University of Toronto Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* and continue to support, develop, and implement strategies that advance Indigenous presence, the development of partnerships and collaboration, and institutional change that reflects the Calls to Action.

**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 (PSEC) and the Vice-President & Provost. The mandate of the OII is to support and guide the U of T community, across all three campuses, 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. The Elders Circle, the Council of Indigenous Initiatives, and the Indigenous Student Advisory Circle all inform the work 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 Office of Indigenous Initiatives, Tee Copenace (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 the Assistant Director of Indigenous Initiatives at the University of Toronto Scarborough, with Carol Ducharme (Keeseekoose First Nation on Treaty 4) stepping into this role as interim Assistant Director in the fall. 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.

Indigenous Ceremonials Commitment

This year saw the advancement of an Indigenous ceremonials commitment centred around smudging and other Indigenous ceremonial practices involving fire or smoke at U of T. The commitment states, “Indigenous ceremonial practices – including but not limited to smudging, ceremonial fires, lighting the qulliq, and pipe ceremonies – are welcome across U of T campuses.” This new initiative strengthens a sense of belonging for Indigenous students and employees as it welcomes ceremony in the workplace, our teaching and learning spaces, and other areas on our three campuses, and is an important step forward in increasing Indigenous presence and reconciliation at the University. For more information, please visit [Smudging and other Indigenous ceremonial practices involving fire or smoke at U of T – The Division of People Strategy, Equity & Culture](#).

Indigenous Beaded Stole – Convocation Ceremonies

At convocation ceremonies on the St. George campus this year, U of T unveiled the first-ever beaded stole for the Eagle Feather Bearers to wear as they led the Chancellor’s procession into Convocation Hall. Designed and hand-beaded by Katie Longboat, a Mohawk and Cree bead artist, this stole includes symbols representative of all three campuses of U of T. It is inspired by their landscapes, including various flowers and waterways of the surrounding areas, combined arts. The stole symbolizes the University’s continued relations with Indigenous peoples and creates space for Indigenous culture. This signifies another step towards making U of T’s convocation inclusive to Indigenous students and advances the institution’s journey towards reconciliation.

Payments to Indigenous Payees Guidelines

New financial guidelines for making payments to Indigenous payees were introduced this year through a collaborative effort between Financial Services and the OII. The partnership ensured a consistent approach across the University, removed barriers experienced by Indigenous payees, and clarified pathways for payment.

The new guidelines respond to institutional commitments identified in the section “Indigenous Research Ethics and Community Relationships” from the *Wecheewetowin Final Report*. The more efficient process contributes to strengthening relationships between the University and the Indigenous community while encouraging future collaborations that draw on Indigenous expertise.

Honorary Doctorate – Doctor of Laws

In June, Wilton Littlechild, an Indigenous advocate, lawyer, and Cree Chief, was awarded a Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, from U of T. Littlechild is recognized for his advocacy and amplification of Indigenous presence and voices around the world. He was a founder of the North American Indigenous Games and World Indigenous Nations Games. He advanced the global Indigenous rights movement through his membership on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and contributed to the writing of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

University of St. Michael’s College – Truth and Reconciliation Committee

In September, the University of St. Michael’s College (USMC) formed its Truth and Reconciliation Committee under the leadership of Professor Mark McGowan. The committee was formed to renew and identify new ways in which USMC might respond to the Faculty of Arts & Science Decanal Working Group Report on Indigenous Teaching and Learning, and to advance reconciliation.



Wilton Littlechild awarded a Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, from the University of Toronto - spring convocation 2024 (photo by Lisa Lightbourn).

Indigenous Spaces

Creating welcoming environments for Indigenous staff, librarians, students, and faculty members across all three campuses at U of T has helped serve a symbolic role, signifying that Indigenous peoples are present on this land and at the University. These spaces support the increasing presence of Indigenous cultures on all three campuses, forming stronger ties for the community, contributing to building relationships, and reminding the community of the rich Indigenous history of the land where the University sits. Across our campuses, new Indigenous spaces were planned and established this year.

Ziibiing: The Indigenous Landscape Project Opening

On September 23, the University welcomed the community to gather in Ziibiing for the official opening of this significant space at the heart of the St. George campus. With words from Elder Eileen Antone and traditional song by Jenny Blackbird, the much-anticipated Indigenous landscape project was celebrated through the gathering of representatives from the Indigenous Advisory Committee, the Council of Indigenous Initiatives, the Elders Circle, and many more from across the University. Ziibiing pays tribute to the history of the land and Taddle Creek (which, though buried, still flows in this space) and to the Indigenous nations who live and still exist today on the traditional Indigenous lands on which U of T is situated. This space provides a gathering space for the community to learn, reflect, and celebrate Indigenous history and culture.

Inclusive Artwork Working Group, School of Continuing Studies

In response to the University's Equity, Diversity & Inclusion report, as well as the University's Calls to Action, the School of Continuing Studies recently announced the creation of the Inclusive Artwork Working Group. The working group is a sub-group of their internal Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Committee, tasked with enhancing learning, teaching, working, and collaborating to ensure an inclusive environment that prioritizes humility, representation, and respect. The working group began developing their first proposal, which included an invitation for Indigenous artists to engage in an artwork initiative in two locations within the Division that challenges colonial perspectives and celebrates Indigenous peoples and culture.



Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) – New Indigenous Space

OISE has committed to create spaces that serve as safe environments and cultural hubs where Indigenous culture and traditions can be celebrated and Indigenous knowledge can be shared. Recently, in a collaborative effort with an Indigenous design consultant, the OISE lobby was redesigned to include seating for talking circles and gatherings within the space as well as design concepts that reflect Indigenous culture. These concepts include a floor-to-ceiling installation of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt depicting shared responsibility and respect for the land.

Walks with Reclamation – UTM Art Mural

In March, the Office of Indigenous Initiatives at the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) and Studio X collaborated on a new art mural project led and designed by Anishinaabe and two-spirit artist and student, MJ Singleton. Singleton invited students to share the task of painting the mural, which has been installed in the Maanjiwe nendamowinan Building located on the UTM campus. In its process and its outcome, the mural project increases Indigenous presence on campus and promotes collaborative work at the University.

Ziibiing (photo by David Lee).

Indigenous Faculty and Staff

The recruitment and hiring of Indigenous faculty, staff, and librarians are fundamental to the ongoing Indigenizing of the institution. These faculty and staff provide Indigenous perspectives, historical methodologies, and epistemologies. While enhancing curricular developments University-wide, they also foster culturally safe environments across our three campuses that enable Indigenous students and employees to thrive.



Lindy Kinoshameg (Odawa Nation from Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory); Indigenous Outreach and Program Coordinator, Office of Indigenous Health, Temerty Faculty of Medicine
Lindy Kinoshameg is a former student in the Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education as well as an alumnus and former coordinator of the Summer Mentorship Program in the Faculty of Medicine. Throughout his career, he has focused on breaking stereotypes and raising cultural awareness around Indigenous knowledge and communities. He has supported Indigenous artists, students, and youth through education, facilitation, and community-building. With a deep connection to Indigenous communities through the arts, Lindy has helped Indigenous artists tour the world and bring their artistic visions to life while also sharing and performing his culture with audiences. Lindy always honours the wisdom of both respecting the seven generations that came before us and remembering that our actions affect the seven generations that follow.



Opposite Page
Lindy Kinoshameg, Indigenous Outreach and Program Coordinator, Office of Indigenous Health, Temerty Faculty of Medicine (Photo by Stef + Ethan).

Top
Dr. Anne Spice, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, UTM (photo by Stef + Ethan).

Carmen Alvis (Turtle Mountain Michif [Métis]); Sessional Lecturer, Centre for Drama, Theatre, and Performance Studies
Carmen Alvis (she/her) is a Turtle Mountain Michif (Métis) artist with Chippewa, Irish, and English ancestors. Based in Tkarón:to, she is one of the leaders of lemonTree creations, manidoons collective, and AdHoc Assembly, and sits on the board of the Dancers of Damelahamid. Carmen has created and toured queer and Indigenous performances across Turtle Island, including venues in Coast Salish territory, Mi'kma'ki, and Treaty 1, 3, 6, and 7 territories. In 2025,

she will direct fourth-year Drama students at the University of Toronto in a new play called *Conjugal* by Donna-Michelle St. Bernard. Carmen is currently writing her first full-length play, *And Then They Came*, about the roles of Two-Spirit people in the early days of the Red River Métis.

Dr. Anne Spice (inland Tlingit, Deishuhíttaan clan [Carcross Tagish/Tlingit], Kwanlin Dün First Nation); Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, UTM
Dr. Anne Spice teaches and develops courses →



on climate apocalypse, the politics of water, and creative ethnographic writing and poetics. Her current book project is an activist auto-ethnography of anti-pipeline resistance, and her research and art connect ancestral Tlingit tattooing practices to mental health and recovery in the Yukon.

Caitlyn Bird (Anishnaabe, Whitefish Bay First Nation); Assistant Curator, Indigenous Art, Doris McCarthy Gallery

Caitlyn Bird was born and raised in Thunder Bay, Ontario. She holds a BFA in Museum Studies from the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and a BA in Indigenous Learning from Lakehead University. Deeply committed to amplifying Indigenous voices through the arts, Caitlyn's curatorial practice focuses on creating spaces that honour and reflect the lived experiences and histories of Indigenous peoples.

Andrea Johns (Kanien'kehá:ka/ Mohawk Nation [Six Nations of the Grand River]); Indigenous Training Coordinator, Office of Indigenous Initiatives

Andrea Johns is a U of T alumna, Honours BA with a Specialist in Indigenous Studies. In her spare time, she is an avid bead worker and artist. Her work has been showcased at the biennial Indigenous Fashion Arts Festival, the Museum of London, and Aaniin Hello, and in the gift shops at the Royal Ontario Museum, the Textile Museum of Canada, and the Art Gallery of Hamilton.

Dr. Justin Beland (Fort William First Nation); Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering

Dr. Justin Beland specializes in machine intelligence, deep learning, probabilistic modelling, data science, and optimization under uncertainty. Professor Beland's teaching philosophy centres around making complex topics understandable and accessible. His research focuses on the development of novel approaches to

address challenges associated with Bayesian optimization of high-dimensional functions and optimization under uncertainty. Specifically, he investigates how representation learning, function decomposition, dimensionality reduction, Gaussian process modelling, deep neural networks, probabilistic numerics, and manifold learning can be used to tackle these issues.

Dr. Meagan Kakwirayéntha Hamilton (Kanien'kehá:ka [Six Nations of the Grand River]); Managing Director, Indigenous Research Network

Dr. Meagan Kakwirayéntha Hamilton joined the Indigenous Research Network (IRN) as Managing Director in May 2024. She supports the IRN's development as a permanent institutional hub for Indigenous scholars and research governance, focusing on mentorship and institutional collaborations, and ensuring that Indigenous research ethics and Indigenous community priorities are respected. She holds a doctorate in Social Science and a master's in Environmental Education and Communication from Royal Roads University, British Columbia, and she previously served as an Assistant Professor in the Centre for Indigenous Studies at U of T. She is a member of Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, is also of settler European ancestry, and is dedicated to collectively supporting the governance structures of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

Marissa Campbell (Qalipu First Nation); Student Life Coordinator, Academic and Indigenous Peer Mentorship Program

Marissa Campbell is excited to start her position at the University of Toronto as the Student Life Coordinator: Academic and Indigenous Peer Mentorship Program. She is Mi'kmaq from the Qalipu First Nation and a mix of European ancestry (English, Irish, Scottish, French). She has over 10 years of experience working as a peer support counsellor within sexual

assault centres, including experience training future peer counsellors. In addition to that, she has several years of experience working with Indigenous youth (ages 12–29) as a supervisor for youth programming and youth leadership initiatives. She completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Toronto with a bachelor's honours degree with a specialist in Women and Gender Studies. She is looking forward to working with students and faculty in her new position.



Opposite Page
Andrea Johns, Indigenous Training Coordinator, Office of Indigenous Initiatives (photo by Stef + Ethan).

Bottom
Dr. Justin Beland, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering (photo by Stef + Ethan).

Indigenous Curriculum

U of T continues to 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. It promotes foundational changes to curricula that reflect Indigenous knowledge systems and protocols.

OII – Indigenizing Curriculum Development Workshop
 Call 17 identified in *Answering the Call: Wecheehetowin Final Report of the Steering Committee for the University of Toronto Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* states that “[t]he University should work to integrate significant Indigenous curriculum content in all of its divisions by 2025.” Honouring this commitment will require leadership and engagement across Faculties, departments, and campuses. To support these efforts, OII launched a workshop designed to ground participants in essential knowledge and principles – informed by Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogy – to begin the process of Indigenizing their

curriculum. Led by Andrew Bomberly of the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, the workshop focuses on strategies to encourage collaboration among instructors, and its three components intersect and complement each other. Participants explore key terms, review a case study, and then gain practical experience by applying an Indigenous curriculum framework to their own syllabi.

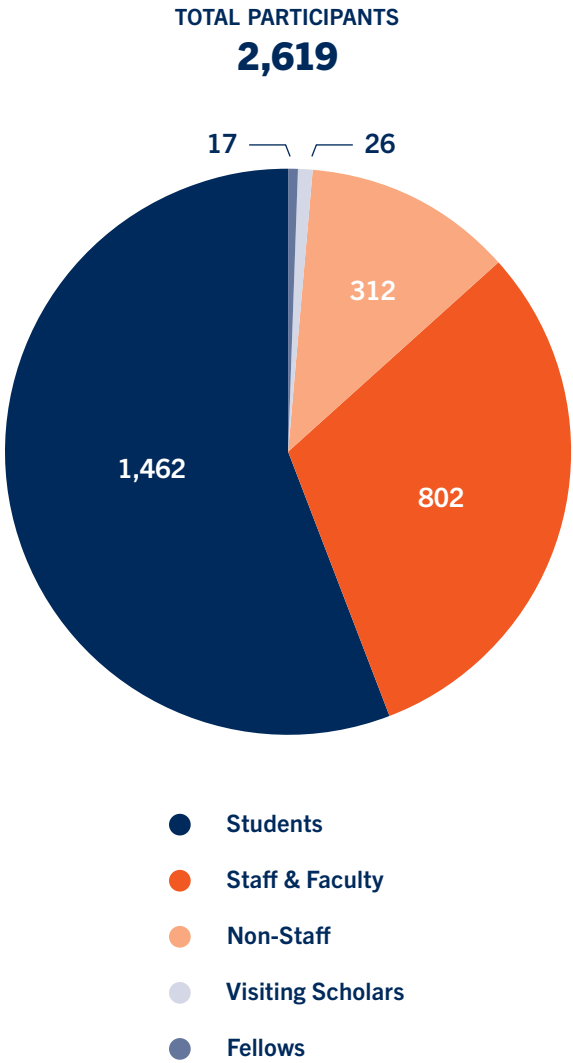
Indigenous Cultural Competency Training – Milestone
 This year, OII reached a milestone in the Cultural Competency participation numbers. More than 10,000 staff, students, faculty, and librarians from across the University took part in the Office’s learning series led by Indigenous Training Coordinator John Crouch of Wiikwemkoong Unceded First Nation. The four-part series explores topics such as the history of Indigenous-settler relations, land acknowledgments, and allyship, while providing participants with a greater understanding of the impacts of settler colonialism. Due to the high demand for the training, OII recently hired a second Training Coordinator, expanding the training available and

advancing reconciliation across the University.

Indigenous Training Series – Expansion
 The Indigenous Training Series offered by OII has expanded at the University. With the addition of a second Training Coordinator, overall capacity has grown, leading to an increase in the number of workshops available to the U of T community, the development of partnerships across the community, and an increase in the tri-campus offerings of Indigenous training. In addition, three new workshops have developed: Ziibiing – Land-based Workshop, Two Canoes: One River – Student-Focused Workshop, and the Wampum and Treaty Making Workshop. Capacity also expanded to include community-based learning initiatives such as the Indigenous Book Club, Film Club, and land-based learning opportunities.



2024 Training Stats



Nêhiyaw (Cree) Syllabic Hymnbooks, referenced in the Victoria University National Day for Truth and Reconciliation commemoration (photo by Halyna Kozar, Victoria University Library (Toronto)).

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.



"Gathering Our Little Shoes" event
(photo by Diana Tysko).

IRN – Strategic Plan Advancements
The Indigenous Research Network (IRN), an Institutional Strategic Initiative at U of T that supports Indigenous researchers and research projects, released its strategic plan to inform the IRN's priorities and action items for the next five years. Dale Turner, a citizen of the Temagami First Nation and Provostial Advisor on Indigenous Research and Director of the IRN, led the creation of an IRN Strategic Planning Working Group to help co-develop the vision, scope of work, and final plan. The IRN also created a new leadership role, Managing Director, which will continue to be critical in the strategic development and management of IRN initiatives and in the implementation and evaluation of strategic goals and long-term planning. More information can be found on the IRN's newly updated website, [Indigenous Research Network](#) at U of T.

Temerty Faculty of Medicine – Mushkiki Miikan Project
The Office of Indigenous Health and the Office of Access and Outreach at the Temerty Faculty of Medicine have partnered with the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and other Ontario medical schools on the collaborative initiative Mushkiki Miikan. The initiative aims to provide supports for Indigenous students during their educational journey in the medical field, including improving access and creating a nurturing environment throughout their academic journey.



Student International Indigenous Cultural Exchange between U of T and New Zealand Māori - Visit to 'Koro' (grandfather) Ruapehu Mountain (photo by Caitlyn Murphy- Eagleson).

Indigenous Students and Indigenous Co-Curricular Education

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

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

U of T 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, in collaboration with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives (including UTM and University of Toronto Scarborough [UTSC] Indigenous Initiatives), First Nations House – Indigenous Student

Services, and Hart House, hosted an institution-wide event located in the Great Hall at Hart House. The commemoration included a welcome from David Kim, Warden of Hart House, and remarks by President Meric Gertler, Acting Vice-President William Gough, and Chancellor Wesley J. Hall. The University invited Shirley Cheechoo, a Canadian Cree actor, artist, filmmaker, and founder of Weengushk Film Institute, who spoke of her residential school experience and life's work in her keynote address. After the →

commemoration, the University invited the community to gather at a sacred fire held at Ziibiing.

- The John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design (DFALD) hosted a commemoration on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation at the main hall of the Daniels Building. Members of the community gathered at noon for lunch catered by Indigenous chef Charles Catchpole, and Elder Dorothy Peters and Traditional Faith Keeper Amos Key Jr. provided opening statements and smudge for the commemoration. Afterwards, Trina Moyan of DFALD’s First Peoples Leadership Advisory Group and James Bird, a PhD student at DFALD, shared remarks and stories with the community. DFALD also held several related events in the weeks leading up to and after this event.
- Victoria University hosted two events related to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation: “Research in Progress – Indigenous Communities and Vic U,” which emphasized that reconciliation is an ongoing journey and not a destination, and “Gather in the Goldring: Recognition of National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Tobacco Ties Making” in partnership with the Office of the Dean of Students.
- The Dean’s Advisory Committee on Indigenous Research, Teaching and Learning at the Faculty of Arts & Science gathered for a panel discussion to commemorate Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The event, titled “‘Gathering Our Little Shoes’: Indigenous-led, Divisional Approaches to Reconciliation,” was held at the Paul Cadario Conference Centre in University College. The panel discussed the Faculty’s progress to date in meeting the Calls to Action of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission as well as their ongoing efforts.



- On September 16, OII, in partnership with Innis College, invited the University community to a free screening of the film *Indian Horse*, based on the novel by the late Richard Wagamese, in honour of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.
- On September 20, UTSC raised the Survivors Flag on campus. Elder Josh Eshkawkogan shared teachings around truth and reconciliation while leading the flag-raising ceremony. Staff from OII Scarborough were in attendance with educational materials and resources to expand community learning. Following the ceremony, UTSC held the “Reflective Walk for Reconciliation,” which invited the community to walk from the flagpole to Moosh Ka Win Valley Trail while reflecting on how to take action and work towards reconciliation.
- On September 27, the Centre for Drama, Theatre & Performance Studies hosted a screening of *Tautuktavuk (What We See)*, directed by Lucy Tulugarjuk and Carol Kunnuk and produced by The Isuma Collective.
- Hart House hosted “Real Talk with Dave: A Brunch Conversation on Reconciliation at U of T.” This event included a panel discussion with Professor Liat Margolis (Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design), MJ Singleton (Indigenous undergraduate student and artist), and Helia Karami (undergraduate student and member of Hart House’s Literary and Library Committee), and moderated by Hart House’s Warden, David Kim. The event invited students to discuss the significance of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and the Truth and Reconciliation Steering Committee’s Calls to Action, and to learn about their impacts at U of T.
- The Dalla Lana School of Public Health supported “Stand Beside Us: Teaching and Healing Ceremony,” an event hosted by Women’s College Hospital Indigenous Health to encourage community reflection

on reconciliation and to honour those impacted by the residential school system.

Captivate: UTSC’s Digital Storytelling Competition

This year’s Captivate: UTSC’s Digital Storytelling Competition invited Shayla Oulette Stonechild, an Indigenous storyteller, influencer, and entrepreneur, to deliver a co-curricular session on crafting emotionally impactful personal narratives. The initiative emphasized the Indigenous roots in storytelling and challenged students to share their own compelling digital stories. UTSC’s Office of Indigenous Initiatives provided consultation to restructure the competition’s rubric to ensure it was holistic and rooted in Indigenous storytelling concepts.

Faculty of Music – Featured Events

This year, the Faculty of Music hosted several events involving Indigenous expertise:

In March, as part of the Music Education Colloquium Series, “A Conversation with Deantha Edmunds,” Canada’s first Inuk professional classical singer Deantha Edmunds joined U of T for an intimate conversation. Edmunds spoke about her role empowering Indigenous peoples across the globe as a mentor, writer, and composer.

The Chamber Choir and guests led by Lori Dolloff presented the concert “Wisdom of the Land,” collaborating with several Indigenous musicians including Deantha Edmunds.

Additionally, the Faculty welcomed the U of T community to a free screening and panel discussion of *Ever Deadly*. The panel consisted of Indigenous singer and hand drummer Jenny Blackbird, musician Christine Duncan, and Lori Dolloff, Associate Professor in Music Education.

Student International Indigenous Cultural Exchange

In the summer of 2024, First Nations House Indigenous Student Services partnered with the Centre for International Experience to develop an Indigenous cultural exchange between the University of Toronto and the New Zealand Ngāti →

Student International Indigenous Cultural Exchange in New Zealand (photo by Caitlyn Murphy-Eagleson).

Rangi Maori Tribe. Eighteen Indigenous students and two Indigenous staff spent two weeks in New Zealand engaging with the history of the North and South Islands of New Zealand and learning Maori customs, while sharing knowledge and building respectful community relations. The University plans to host a group of youth from New Zealand here in Toronto as the next stage of the Indigenous cultural exchange.

Hart House (Un)mapping the Territory: An Indigenous Artist/Research Residency

U of T's Art Museum and Hart House launched a one-year artist residency announcing Akni:ho'gwa:s Artist Collective as the 2024–25 Indigenous Artists in Residence. This residency includes the work of Jeff Doctor, Cayuga from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and Mohawk Nation citizen, and Courtney Skye, Mohawk Nation citizen, Turtle Clan, From Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and shares collaborative work centred in the Haudenosaunee territory. The residency includes a series of workshops, exhibitions, public talks, and relationship-building opportunities while inviting the community to gather and reflect.

Temerty Faculty of Medicine – Student Initiatives

The Office of Indigenous Health, in collaboration with the Centre for Wise Practices and the Office of Access and Outreach, organized the initiative “ZKA’AN NI-BMIWDOOWIN GCHI-KINOOMAADWINAN – Building the Fire, Walking with Medicine.” This one-week program provided culturally safe and trauma-informed programming and mentorship opportunities for Indigenous high school students from across the city.

The Office of Indigenous Health invited community member Shar Kelly and Kawennanoron Cindy White, Elder in Residence at Ganawishkadawe – the

Centre for Wise Practices in Indigenous Health, to lead a multi-session drum-making workshop for students.

The Temerty Faculty of Medicine sponsored two Indigenous faculty members and six Indigenous students to attend the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada Annual Mentorship Gathering and AGM, located at Dalhousie University. The theme of the gathering was “Our Stories. Our Medicine,” and the event provided Indigenous medical students, residents, and physicians with a space to celebrate cultural events and engage in networking opportunities.

Student Life – Career Journey – Keeping the Fire Lit

The Career Journey – Keeping the Fire Lit is a five-part learning series for Indigenous students created by Amanda Andrews, Indigenous Career Educator. The series includes a holistic approach with Indigenous principles and a medicine wheel framework, enhancing career development. Students learn how career decision-making is connected to cultural identity and spirituality, while exploring mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects within the decision-making process.

First Nations House Indigenous Student Services – Firekeeper Training Program

In September, First Nations House launched the Firekeeper Training Program, facilitated by Jenny Blackbird. The training program equipped students with the skills associated with a ceremonial fire, including setting up equipment, and lighting, tending to, and extinguishing the fire. The trainees attended ceremonial events on campus to learn and to demonstrate their skills. Additionally, the trainees underwent Axe Training Certifications with Caleb Musgrave of Hiawatha First Nation, and Fire Extinguisher Training with U of T Fire Safety.

OISE – “When the Pine Needles Fall: Indigenous Acts of Resistance”

In November, OISE, along with Between



National Day for Truth and Reconciliation held at Hart House, St. George campus (photo by Polina Teif).

the Lines Books, Critical Health and Social Action Lab, Indigenous Education Network, and Indigenous Literatures Lab, hosted “When the Pine Needles Fall: Indigenous Acts of Resistance,” which drew more than 560 registrants. This event was an evening of dialogue with Katsi’tsakwas Ellen Gabriel, a renowned Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk) land defender. Gabriel engaged

in a conversation with Sean Carleton from the University of Manitoba, Jennifer Brant and Jeffrey Ansloos from OISE, Robyn Maynard from U of T, and Beverly Jacobs from the University of Windsor. Topics included Gabriel’s work in advocacy, Indigenous issues within academia, and ensuring a decolonial future.

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 OII requested feedback from U of T departments, offices, centres, Faculties, and campuses about challenges experienced by Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and librarians across the institution. In addition, OII 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;
- Lack of Indigenous presence or representation in various Faculties and departments, often resulting in little to no Indigenous input in planning or executing projects and goals;
- 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;
- Lack of resources to support recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff, faculty, and librarians;
- The persistent belief that Indigenous systems and approaches are unequal to academic systems and approaches;
- A lack of opportunities for Indigenous staff to build community and share experiences across different areas of the University and enhance Indigenous mentorship support;
- Indigenous identity fraud that continues to impact our communities in post-secondary institutions and beyond.

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, staff, and librarians; recruiting Indigenous students; advancing the dissemination of Indigenous cultures, histories, 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.



Emilee Ann Pitawanakwat, a hoop dancer from Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory on Manitoulin Island, performs during the UTM All-Nations Powwow (Photo by Nick Iwanushyn).

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 OII continues to grow, so will its impact on the U of T community in advancing Indigenous issues with transparency, accountability, and proficiency.



section 4

Opening of Indigenous House, UTSC
Anticipated to open in summer 2025, Indigenous House will provide a dedicated building and outdoor space for learning, ceremony, and socializing. It will support Indigenous research, curriculum-building, and recruitment efforts as well as celebrate Indigenous ways of knowing.

OISE – 5th Floor Roof Community Garden & Cultural Practice Space
OISE has been planning a redesign of their underutilized 5th floor terrace as a vibrant community gathering space as well as a teaching and learning space. The space, which is anticipated to open in the summer of 2025, has been co-designed with Indigenous architects and will include a medicine garden and harvesting table, ceremonial gathering space, and fire pit.

Indigenous Affinity Group
At the end of 2024, OII invited Indigenous staff across the University to join the newly created Indigenous Affinity Group. The group is an opportunity for members to engage in meaningful dialogue, network, and collaborate in a welcoming and safe space. The

first Indigenous Affinity Group meeting will take place in 2025 to discuss group details and terms of reference.

Indigenous Hub – U of T St. George Campus
Plans are now underway for a new Indigenous build on the St. George campus that will become the new home of Indigenous Student Services, the Centre for Indigenous Studies, and OII.

Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy – PharmPath Expansion and Certificate in Indigenous Health
In a project led by Dr. Jaris Swidrovich, Two Spirit, Saulteaux and Ukrainian pharmacist from Yellow Quill First Nation (Treaty 4 territory, Saskatchewan), the Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy will be expanding aspects of the successful PharmPath program, which helps high school students from under-represented communities in the Greater Toronto Area to learn more about career opportunities in pharmacy, to include a focus on Indigenous communities and highlight Indigenous experiences in pharmacy

practice. The expansion will also include more Indigenous mentorship programs and increase awareness, and aims to increase Indigenous representation in pharmacy education.

In addition, under the direction of Dr. Swidrovich, the Faculty began developing a certificate in Indigenous Health, which will be part of the PharmD program. The certificate will provide students with experiential learning opportunities related to Indigenous health and will develop Indigenous knowledge resources to be used in the PharmD curriculum. In doing so, the certificate aims to support the recruitment and retention of Indigenous students within the Faculty.

Emmanuel College – Indigenous Healing Garden
Construction began in the fall of 2024 for the highly anticipated Indigenous Healing Garden located at Emmanuel College. Together, the Indigenous Garden Advisory Committee and the Indigenous Advisory Circle gathered to discuss the Indigenous language and names, medicinal plants, and overall design of the project, expected to open in May 2025.

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) – The Circle Pedagogy Project
OISE is currently developing a new initiative led by Professor Jennifer Wemigwans, called the Circle Pedagogy Project. This project includes enhancing the teaching of Indigenous content within the Adult Education and Community Development program at OISE through the implementation of a faculty workshop series.

Lawrence Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing – Video Series
In collaboration with the Indigenous Diabetes Health Circle of Ontario, the Faculty of Nursing is developing a learning series led by Dr. Amy Wright. Using a holistic approach, this project aims to make health resources accessible and visible, and to prevent diabetes among Indigenous families and men. The initiative is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

Top
Indigenous Beaded Stole and Eagle Feather worn by the Eagle Feather Bearer at convocation (Photo by Lisa Sakulensky).

Back page
Lindy Kinoshameg in Zibiing (photo by Stef + Ethan).



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