

University College Committee Responding to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 6 November 2019

Introduction

In 2018 University College (UC) Council authorized a committee that would examine the recommendations of [*Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada \(2015\)*](#), [*Answering the Call - Wecheehetowin: Final Report of the Steering Committee for the University of Toronto Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada \(2017\)*](#), and [*The Report of the Decanal Working Group on Indigenous Teaching and Learning \(2018\)*](#) in order to make recommendations for action at University College that would participate in the national project of Truth and Reconciliation. The committee consisted of students (Alisa Christian, Lama Karim, Ziigwen Mixemong), staff (Shannon Simpson, Director of First Nations House, and formerly seconded to the UC Registrar's Office), faculty (Alana Johns, former Director of Indigenous Studies, Professor Emeritus), and administrators (John Marshall, Vice Principal and Associate Professor, Department for the Study of Religion). The committee met three times in order: first, to digest the reports of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and the University of Toronto's (U of T), and the Faculty of Arts & Science's (FAS) responses, and to describe input needed from units in University College; second, to consider input from UC units and formulate draft recommendations; and third, to evaluate and shape a preliminary version of this report. Weather, commitments, and other logistical challenges made in person participation less than total in some instances, but electronic communication served as a back up. The report was also presented for student feedback to the Indigenous Student Advisory group at First Nations House on 18 October 2019. Their input was valuable to the report and has been incorporated.

The committee recognizes and affirms that the process of Truth and Reconciliation is a long term project. It may take generations. It will certainly take will, focus,

resources, and understanding. Our aim is to build a foundation for University College to make the process of Truth and Reconciliation basic to our operations, to provide suggestions for improvement of our current processes and delivery of services, and to promote the telling of truth about the interactions between University College and the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island.

Current Practice at University College

Our first meeting on 26 November 2018 reviewed the reports of the TRC, the University of Toronto, and the Faculty of Arts and Science. On the basis of the recommendations of those reports, the committee sent queries to the UC registrarial services, student services, directors of UC programs, the Principal of the College, and the acting Director of Advancement, making inquiries about the ways in which those areas of UC already serve the goals of truth and reconciliation. Our thinking was that recommendations need to be based on a knowledge of what is going on already and where needs lie.

The committee's second meeting, 28 January 2019, reviewed that input and discussed draft recommendations which were in turn transformed into a preliminary report.

Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, the third meeting did not go ahead as scheduled. Instead, consultation took place over email.

There is a long project in the pursuit of *truth* that was beyond the capacity of the one-year committee. The truth of the University of Toronto's and University College's relations to Indigenous land and Indigenous people needs to be told. This includes the history of the campus lands, the history and process of clergy lands that the Crown acquired by various means and which funded the construction of the University College main building, and also the early history of Indigenous students

at the College and the U of T. This is a larger task than the capacities of University College can address, but the college needs to participate in the an effort by the University of Toronto to address these questions of truth that are necessary to any genuine reconciliation.

What follows is a summary of the input from the various divisions of University College.

- *Health Studies*

The Health Studies program has introduced INS 200H1 “Introduction to Indigenous Truth and Resilience” as an alternative to PHL 281H1 “Bioethics.” Students must take one of these two courses in order to fulfill a major or specialist in Health Studies. The Health Studies program has offered and is working to continue offering HST 309H1 “Special Topics in Health Studies II: Indigenous Health and Healing in the Six Nations,” which has a significant field experience component where most of the teaching is by Indigenous Elders and community members. INS 205H, 340Y, and 250H are also listed as suitable to be counted towards a Health Studies major or specialist program.

- *Canadian Studies*

Canadian Studies courses frequently include focus on Indigenous issues and make use of materials by Indigenous authors and concerning Canada’s Indigenous people (CDN 230H, 267H, 268H, 367H, 396H). The program’s experiential learning course (435Y “Active Citizenship in a Canadian Context”) has included placements in Indigenous organizations. CDN 340H: “The History of Canadian-US Relations”, CDN 365H: “The Canadian Arctic”, and JUG 320H: “The Canadian Wilderness” offer considerable focus on Indigenous issues. In the January 2020 school term, Canadian Studies is offering two first year foundation seminars that include significant focus on Indigenous issues: CDN 198H “Canada, Colonialism and Settler Relations” and CDN 197H “Inventing Canada”.

- *Cognitive Science*

The Cognitive Science program, being less socially and/or regionally located than other UC programs has less focus on course content concerning Indigenous peoples, though COG 260H Data, Computation, and the Mind offers significant attention to the specificity of numeral systems in Indigenous cultures in Amazonian regions.

- *UC One*

UC One consists of four streams and the plenary activities of the streams acting together. In plenary terms, several speakers have addressed questions of Indigeneity, namely Chief Carolyn King of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, and Donna Michelle St. Bernard (former director of Native Earth Performing Arts, Canada's oldest professional Indigenous theatre company).

Individual courses such as UNI 103 "Gradients of Health in the Urban Mosaic" treat Indigenous health services in Toronto directly. The topics treated by UNI 102 "Performing the City" vary in relation to the theatre offerings in the city in a given term but have included plays treating First Nations peoples.

- *The UC Registrar's Office*

Advisors in the Registrar's Office work closely and collaboratively with the team at First Nations House (FNH) in supporting Indigenous students. Advisors liaise regularly with the team at FNH to connect Indigenous students at UC with culturally specific supports and resources available to them on campus. Financial Aid Advisors in the Registrar's Office also work one-on-one and have extensive experience assisting Indigenous students with issues pertaining to institutional financial support and Band Support Funding. The Registrar's Office now administers a new scholarship that prioritizes students who identify as Black or Indigenous and continues to prioritize the needs of all underrepresented groups,

including Indigenous students.

- *The Office of the Dean of Students*

The Office of the Dean of Students has been attentive to professional development for staff to ensure that they are equipped to support Indigenous students and make appropriate referrals to existing services and programs. Specific student programming is usually opportunity driven; student tours of the “I Continue to Shape” and Kent Monkman exhibits at the Art Museum, Orange Shirt Day programming, and a walking tour of the Indigenous histories of the St. George Campus are recent examples. The Office of the Dean of Students has also been an active sponsor of pow wows on the St. George Campus.

- *Conclusion*

This narrative of what is going on is not meant to be celebratory or exculpatory, but to set a context for the recommendations that follow. It is clear that work is underway, and that work must be continued and extended. The committee hopes our work can help develop UC’s participation in the endeavour of truth and reconciliation.

Calls to Action from the TRC, the University of Toronto, and the Faculty of Arts and Science

In addition to the units treated in the previous section, the committee also sought input on specific questions from the Principal of University College, Prof. Donald Ainslie, from the Director of the Centre for Indigenous Studies, Prof. Susan Hill, from its former director, Prof. Keren Rice, and from the Acting Director of Advancement at UC, Larry Davies. Their input, combined with that of the units above contribute to the recommendations that follow. The recommendations below are organized in relation to specific calls to action from the TRC, the University of Toronto, and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. While the committee supports those

reports in their entirety, we focus on those areas of action that fall within the scope of action available to the College. We preface our recommendations with the appropriate calls to action from the three reports cited above. We abbreviate them as TRC, UT, and A&S with accompanying call numbers.

The meetings of the committee, in addition to making the recommendations below, also included thanks and affirmation of work underway, as well as consideration of types of support from the Faculty of Arts and Science, and from the University as a whole, that are necessary to further the project of truth and reconciliation. Our recommendations are made in coordination with this recognition, thanks, and advocacy.

- *For the Principal of University College*

With regard to UT#4 (Short-Term Call to Action: The University should launch a process to identify and name appropriate spaces on the three campuses using Indigenous languages.)

#1 We recommend that the Principal of University College open dialogue with Heritage Canada to revise the signage at the front of the College to include narration of the role of Indigenous lands, and its concentration through clergy lands, in the financing of the University College building.

We further recommend signage or other recognition in the new hallway from the elevator to the main second floor space of the role of Indigenous peoples on the lands and in the life of University College.

For all of these actions, appropriate languages should be Mohawk and Anishinaabemowin when and if Indigenous languages are appropriate to the signage in question. Consultation with Elders and/or traditional teachers should be part of these processes.

With regard to UT#5 (Call to Action: All renovation and new construction on campus should take smudging into consideration in the design process.)

#2 We recommend that efforts be made to ensure the possibility of smudging in, if possible, the Clarke Reading Room and the Cadario Conference Centre at Croft Chapter House. In the longer term, this should be part of planning for any renovations to the UC Union building.

- *For the Registrar of University College*

In regard to FAS#6 (Ensure college and faculty/registrarial offices are equipped to meet the diverse needs of Indigenous students by hiring Indigenous registrarial staff, providing ongoing staff training, developing awareness of on-campus services and by developing relationships with community resources and support networks to which students can be referred) and FAS#7 (For the start of the 2018-2019 academic year, put in place new academic supports for Indigenous students enrolled in the Faculty, regardless of program, such as a First Year Learning Community and a Mentorship program.)

#3 We recommend that the Office of the Registrar make a special effort to provide summer financial support for Indigenous students. They often need to complete program obligations outside the regular Fall/Winter cycle and the committee judged that summer support could make a meaningful and supportive intervention into their course of study. This may involve examination of the terms of individual endowments for student to support to learn if their resources could be directed in this manner.

We further recommend, for reasons similar to those given above, that the Registrar make a similar effort to provide support for Indigenous students undertaking part-time study.

We also recommend that the Office of the Registrar explore the terms of its scholarships to see if there are others that could prioritise support for Indigenous students.

- *For the Dean of Students at University College*

In regard to FAS#7: (For the start of the 2018-2019 academic year, put in place new academic supports for Indigenous students enrolled in the Faculty, regardless of program, such as a First Year Learning Community and a Mentorship program.)

#4 We recommend that the Dean of Students support the development of residence contexts that are supportive to Indigenous students. This may be a contiguous “neighbourhood” within UC for Indigenous students who seek this, or it may be an endeavour undertaken more extensively by cooperation of colleges on the St. George Campus. The more general roommate matching procedure may be the place to undertake this. Consultation with First Nations House is advisable for this procedure.

With regard to UT#5 (Call to Action: All renovation and new construction on campus should take smudging into consideration in the design process.)

#5 Given that space on campus for individual smudging is scarce, the committee recommends that the Dean of Students continue exploration of whether the former Sir Dan’s Porter’s Office could be converted into a smudging space for Indigenous students. It may also be bookable for appropriately sized gatherings that would start with smudging.

- *For the Director of the Health Studies Program*

In regard to FAS#11 (Ask faculty within all Arts & Science units to review their curriculum and learning materials with the goal of ensuring that course content concerning Indigenous peoples reflects best practices and contemporary scholarship), and FAS#16 (Provide opportunities for students to experience land-based pedagogies so that they can learn within Indigenous worldviews on the land, with Indigenous knowledge experts. Land-based pedagogies include the study of the complex and sophisticated relationships with citified Indigenous territories, including Tkaronto.)

#6 Our recommendation is mainly an expression of support for the endeavour and

the structure of HST 309H1 “Special Topics in Health Studies II: Indigenous Health and Healing in the Six Nations.” We recommend to the College that it offer administrative, advancement, and logistical support to this endeavour. We further recommend developing cooperation with Indigenous Studies inasmuch as the resources of Indigenous Studies and the program structure of Health Studies make this possible.

- *For the Director of the Canadian Studies Program*

In regard to FAS#11 (Ask faculty within all Arts & Science units to review their curriculum and learning materials with the goal of ensuring that course content concerning Indigenous peoples reflects best practices and contemporary scholarship), and FAS#16 (Provide opportunities for students to experience land-based pedagogies so that they can learn within Indigenous worldviews on the land, with Indigenous knowledge experts. Land-based pedagogies include the study of the complex and sophisticated relationships with citified Indigenous territories, including Tkaronto.)

#7 Recognizing that the relation of Canadian Studies to Indigenous Studies needs to enact the nation-to-nation model of relationship that should govern Canada’s relation to First Nations, we recommend continued development of joint curriculum, joint courses, joint events, joint speakers, and perhaps in the medium- to long-term, joint faculty with Indigenous Studies. The requirement of a course in Indigenous Studies for the Canadian Studies Program should also be considered.

These endeavours depend on recognition of the capacity of both units. Discussions with Keren Rice affirmed the value of absolute independence of the two units even as genuine cooperation is eminently desirable.

- *For the Director of the Cognitive Science Program*

In regard to FAS#11 (Ask faculty within all Arts & Science units to review their curriculum and learning materials with the goal of ensuring that course content concerning Indigenous peoples reflects best practices and contemporary scholarship), and FAS#16 (Provide opportunities for students to experience land-based pedagogies so that they can learn within Indigenous worldviews on the land, with Indigenous knowledge experts. Land-based pedagogies include the

study of the complex and sophisticated relationships with citified Indigenous territories, including Tkaronto.)

#8 Recognizing the particular challenges for Cognitive Science on this topic we affirm the attention to diverse modes of cognition and we urge the program to consider ways in which it can address the diverse ways of knowing implied by various language systems and culturally specific regimes of knowledge.

- *For the Vice-Principal of University College, as co-ordinator of UC One*

In regard to FAS#11 (Ask faculty within all Arts & Science units to review their curriculum and learning materials with the goal of ensuring that course content concerning Indigenous peoples reflects best practices and contemporary scholarship), and FAS#16 (Provide opportunities for students to experience land-based pedagogies so that they can learn within Indigenous worldviews on the land, with Indigenous knowledge experts. Land-based pedagogies include the study of the complex and sophisticated relationships with citified Indigenous territories, including Tkaronto.)

#9 The Committee recommends continued inclusion of Indigenous speakers in the plenary meetings and other instruction of UC One courses, as well as Indigenous literature among the readings.

- *Other issues*

A few other issues arose that did not quite match the data the committee gathered but concerning which we wish to encourage interaction with.

#10 As the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, which includes the U of T Art Centre at UC, increases its focus on Indigenous art, we want to encourage cooperation with UC programs, especially Canadian Studies and UC One.

The FAS call to Action #1 concerning the establishment of an Indigenous College offers starting points for action that include an annual Orientation Week pow wow. Whether or not an actual pow wow is feasible for that time, the College should cooperate with and support the UC Lit in participating in any FAS wide Indigenous themed event during orientation.

#11 In order to realize many of the actions called for in the reports of the University of Toronto, the Faculty of Arts and Science, and this report, we call upon the Director of Advancement for University College, in consultation with the Principal, to include these responses within the advancement priorities of their office.

Conclusion

The operation of this committee and of those who have contributed to it represent an early step in a process that will be ongoing. The committee wishes to thank all those involved for their care and commitment to truth and reconciliation. Our final recommendation is thus:

#12 The actions called for within this report should be reviewed by a biennial report to College Council until council sets up other processes to continue the work.