

University College Committee Responding to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission

This draft of the report is designed for feedback from students at First Nations House in the University of Toronto.

Introduction

In 2018 University College 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 (Shanon 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, Study of Religion). The committee met three times in order to: first, digest the reports of the TRC, the university, and the faculty and describe input needed from units in University College; second, consider input from UC units and formulate 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 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 reviewed the reports of the TRC, the University 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's going on already and where needs lie.

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

There is a long project in the pursuit of truth that was beyond the capacity of the one-year committee. The truth of the 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 and the College and the U of T. This is a larger task that 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 INS200H1 Introduction to Indigenous Truth and Resilience as an alternative to PHL281H1: 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 HST309H1 - Special Topics in Health Studies II: Indigenous Health and Healing in the Six Nations, which has a significant field experience component and 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 reading 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. CDN340H: The History of Canadian-

US Relations; CDN365H: The Canadian Arctic; and JUG320H: The Canadian Wilderness offer considerable focus on Indigenous issues.

■ *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 COG260H 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 Student Life*

The office of the Dean of Student Life 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 tours of the “I Continue to Shape” and Kent Monkman exhibits at the Art Museum, Orange Shirt Day programming,¹ and a walking tour of the Indigenous histories of the St. George Campus are recent examples. The Office of the Dean of Student Life has also been an active sponsor of Powow’s 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.

¹ Orange Shirt Day is a national event in September that strives to open public conversation on and memory of the effects of residential school on Canada’s Indigenous peoples.

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 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, 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 the 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 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 land, and its concentration through clergy lands, in the financing of the University College building.

We further recommend that consideration be given to naming and decorating spaces in the new College Library (study rooms or individual alcoves) in recognition of Indigenous peoples whose lands financed the building of UC.

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 as many as possible of: The Clarke Reading Room, UC 261, Croft Chapter House, the SCR, and A101.

■ *For the Registrar of the 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 FAS7 (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 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*

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 co-operation of colleges on the St. George Campus.

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 Space on campus for individual smudging is scarce and 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.

■ *For the Director of Health Studies*

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 Indigenous territories, including Tkaronito.)

#6 Our recommendation is mainly an expression of support for the endeavour and the structure of HST309H1 - 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 co-operation with Indigenous Studies inasmuch as the resources of Indigenous Studies and the program structure of Health Studies make this possible.

■ *For the Director of Canadian Studies*

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. This depends 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 co-operation is eminently desirable.

■ *For the Director of Cognitive Science*

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 knowlege.

■ *For the Vice-Principal 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.

■ *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 University of Toronto Art Centre increases its focus on Indigenous Art, we want to encourage co-operation 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 an indigenous themed event during orientation.

#11 In order to realize many of the actions called for in the reports of the University, 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 her office.

Conclusion

I need to write this. It should include thanks to participants and emphasis that this is a beginning to provide a framework for continuing action for truth and reconciliation.

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. [Here I need to consult with the committee, but I would like to add that:] Our final recommendation is that the actions called for within this report be reviewed by an annual report to college council until council sets up other processes to continue the work.