

Western University  
Indigenous Postsecondary Education Council (IPEC)  
Meeting Minutes

July 12, 2019

The meeting was held from 10:00 am – 3:30 pm at Aamjiwnaang First Nation Community Centre, 1972  
Virgil Ave., Sarnia, Ontario. N7T 7H5

**PRESENT:**

**AFFILIATION:**

**MEMBERS**

Danielle ALCOCK	Southern Aboriginal Health Access Centre (SOAHAC)
Bernita BRINGHAM	Post-Secondary Coordinator, Walpole Island First Nation Bkejwanong Territory
Candace BRUNETTE	Co-Chair of IPEC and Special Advisor to the Provost, Indigenous Initiatives
Regna DARNELL	President's Appointee
Brent DEBASSIGE	Director, Indigenous Education, Faculty of Education
Debbie DOLSON	Post-Secondary Counsellor, Chippewa of the Thames First Nations – Deshkan Ziibi
Janice FORSYTH	Director, Indigenous Studies, Faculty of Social Science
Paula HEDGEPEETH	Project Coordinator, Indigenous Initiatives
Ashley KEWAYOSH	Program Coordinator, Indigenous Services
Myrna KICKNOSWAY	Visiting Elder, Indigenous Services
Amanda MYERS	Director, Indigenous Services (IS)
Jody NOAH	Co-Chair of IPEC and Postsecondary Counsellor for Southern First Nations Secretariat (SFNS)
Tehya QUACHEGAN	Student representative, President of Indigenous Student Association (ISA)
Peter SIMPSON	Associate Vice-Provost, School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS)
Laura SPERO	Aamjiwnaang First Nation – Post Secondary Counsellor
Deanne VAN TOL	Affiliate Designate, Huron University College
Kiersten WILLIAMS	Student representative, Indigenous Relations Liaison, University Student Council (USC)

**GUESTS**

Andrew HRYMAK	Provost and Vice President Academics of Western University
Chris PLAIN	Chief of Aamjiwnaang First Nation
Mike PLAIN	Elder of Aamjiwnaang First Nation
Alan SHEPARD	President of Western University

**REGRETS**

Kathleen ANDERSON	Mètis Nation of Ontario
Joe Henry	Kings University College
Melanie MOLNAR	Brescia University College
Jenny MASSEY	Associate Vice President of Student Experience
Rick Montour	Grand River Post-Secondary Education Office

**1. Traditional Opening**

By: Elder, Mike Plain conducted a traditional opening for the meeting.

**2. Welcome**

By: Laura Spero and Chief Chris Plain

- Chief thanked IPEC members for coming, welcomed them to the Aamjiwnaang Territory.
- He briefly mentioned the interest on the topic of industry in Aamjiwnaang - a large, complicated issue, but one that he did not wish to focus his words on this today, but instead talked about the importance of education historically and today.
- Chief shared a brief history of education— past, present and future. He outlined a strong commitment to education and Aamjiwnaang’s move toward overseeing their own education process, creating their own curriculum and making their own educational decisions.
- Aamjiwnaang overview: 2400 total population, of which, 750 live on-reserve, 250 reside in Michigan with the remainder living in urban areas and a large portion in Sarnia.

**3. Bus tour of Aamjiwnaang**

by: Wilson Plain Jr.

**4. Western Presentation**

by: Candace Brunette-Debassige Special Advisor to the Provost

- Outlined the shift happening across universities and colleges in Canada since the release of the TRC with a focus on the impacts at Western.
- Western has moved from a student services to whole-of-university model and is moving forward in the creation of an Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII) that will lead proactive institutional work across policy making/changing, workplace learning, learning environments, student affairs, pedagogy, etc.
- Recognition that universities cannot do the work without Indigenous input “nothing about us without us” motto as outlined by the Provost’s Task Force on the Implementation of the Strategic Plan released in August 2018.
- Highlighted Westerns past – Indigenous work for the last 25-years that has accelerated since TRC.
- Indigenous Service’s founded in 1994.
- Indigenous Postsecondary Education Council founded in 1995.
- First Nations Studies program founded in 2003. Regna Darnell was recognized for spearheading this work.
- IS’s Mini University in place since 2006.
- Faculty of Education’s Masters community-based program founded in 2008. The program has a permanent partnership with Six Nations Polytechnic Institute.

- Indigenous Access Pathway founded in 2010 offers special admission consideration to undergraduate applicants applying to five Faculties (1) Social Science, (2) Science, (3) Health Science, (4) Engineering and (5) Arts and Humanities.
- Western's Indigenous Gathering Our Voices spearheaded in 2013 called for the need of an Indigenous Strategic Plan.
- Western's first Indigenous Strategic Plan approved by Senate and Board of Governors in 2016.

### Western's Indigenous representation today

- Indigenous student representation is reported to be approximately 533 students – Western has experienced a 10-12% annual growth and the population has doubled since 2010
- Indigenous faculty member representation is reported to be 0.5% based on employee census. The national average is 1.5% so Western is on the low end.
- Indigenous staff representation is under 0.8% based on employee census. This is alarmingly low.

In 2017-18. The *Provost's Task Force on the Implementation of the Indigenous Strategic Plan* – concluded its work and produced a final report in June 2018 that called Western University to:

- Undergo an Indigenous Faculty Cluster hiring process.
  - Currently this process is underway. A job advertisement was released to the public in early June 2019 with a focus on hiring Indigenous faculty members in the areas of Indigenous Studies, Indigenous Education and Indigenous Health.
- Hire a Senior Role to the Provost (SRPO) ASAP.
  - Candace Brunette-Debassige was appointed September 1<sup>st</sup> 2018 on a 24 month contract as the interim Special Advisor to the Provost. Part of this role is to advise the Provost in defining the SRPO role and new Office of Indigenous Initiatives mission and scope.

### Some Highlights since the launch of Western's Indigenous Strategic Plan

- Western's Housing Services – launched an **Indigenous and allied floor** in Delaware Hall 2017.
- **An Inter-Disciplinary Initiative (IDI) in Applied Indigenous Scholarship** from 2015-2019 was led by Chantelle Richmond and involved the coordination of summer and winter schools to build Indigenous capacity among students, staff and faculty. The IDI also published a **Guide for Working with Indigenous Students** ([www.indigenousguide.uwo.ca](http://www.indigenousguide.uwo.ca)).
- Western Research in partnership with Indigenous Services developed an **Indigenous Head to Heart program** geared toward Indigenous undergraduate students wishing to explore research as part of a 13-week paid summer fellowship program offered in 2018 and 2019.
- Psychological Services in Student Experience in partnership with Indigenous Services applied and received government funding to pilot a shared **Indigenous Counsellor role** 2018-19.
- A faculty member in the Faculty of Science has developed and will be piloting a new **Indigenous astronomy course** in fall 2019.

### New Indigenous faculty hires/promotions

- Chantelle Richmond was promoted and appointed as a Canada Research Chair (CRC) in Indigenous Health and Geography in 2017-18.

- Diana Lewis was hired as an Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social Science in the area of Indigenous Studies and Geography in July 2018.
- Frankie Young was hired as an Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law in July 2019.

### **Indigenous Hiring in process**

- Indigenous faculty cluster hire – up to 4 Indigenous faculty members to be hired in the areas of Education, Health and Indigenous Studies.
- Indigenous Leader-in-Residence– Schulich School of Dentistry and Medicine will be hiring a leader to support Faculty initiatives. This search in progress.

### **5. Indigenous Studies (Indigi Stu) - Update**

by Janice Forsyth

- Name change –First Nation Studies is now officially called Indigenous Studies. Since there is already a unit with acronym of IS (e.g. Indigenous Services), Indigenous Studies is shortened to Indigi Stu.
- Indigi Stu is a standalone program situated in the Faculty of Social Science. Indigi Stu strives to move to department status (currently a program) since departments have their own budgets and practices. Right now, Indigi Stu floats within the Faculty of Social Science and reports directly to the Dean of Social Science (Bob Andersen).
- Since 2017 there have been many changes in Indigi Stu beginning with the appointment of the new Director, Janice Forsyth.
- The director's primary role has focused on bringing the program to department status. A focus has been on moving through its first formal academic program review process with the Ministry and reorganizing its finances and curriculum.
- A program review was conducted in 2018-19, this is a government required process that has never been done before. The review process involved bringing in two external consultants based in the field of Indigenous Studies in February 2019. A program review report will be available once it is approved by the Dean. The release of this report will provide information needed to move forward with the Strategic Plan.
- The Faculty and program have been committed to hiring full-time tenure track faculty members directly linked to the program. Indigenous Studies is aiming to have five total faculty members associated with the program. This is an internal benchmark of Western University. Janice Forsyth is included in this total number along with the new hire Diana Lewis. Another search in Indigenous Studies is underway along with the upcoming Indigenous cluster hire process. As per the program review findings, hiring more faculty members in Indigi Stu will strengthen the program's position to become a department.
- Indigi stu is hosting a curriculum workshop on Monday July 15, 2019. This workshop is open to all IPEC members, Western staff and faculty members. This workshop will help guide Indigi stu in designing its approach to curriculum and creating a vision of what students, staff and faculty want to see Indigi Stu focus on. Consultation will help map a way forward for this program/department.
- The director recognizes that Indigenous language learning and revitalization is a concern across the country. "Language is who we are".

- The program has been redesigning a suite of Indigenous (Mohawk) language courses led by Kanatawakhon that has mapped three interconnected courses (1) introduction to Mohawk, (2) inter-Mohawk language and (3) Mohawk metaphors. (Taking common metaphors to introduce to the culture). These courses are open to all Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.
- Indigi stu will be adding Oneida’s summer language course as a permanent course code, and has added new courses in research and development. The director recognizes how expectations of Indigenous students and communities are high, and “we need to build capacity for Western students who wish to do research within Indigenous communities.”

## **6. Indigenous Services (IS) Update**

by Amanda Myers and Ashley Kewayosh

- Amanda Myers was introduced and congratulated for being successfully appointed as the incoming Director of Indigenous Services starting July 2019.
- The IS Director and Program Coordinator (Ashley Kewayosh) co-presented a brief overview on IS’s mission, programs and services. They shared how the work of IS is slowly shifting back to focusing on Indigenous students. Over the last academic year, since the arrival of the Special Advisor, IS has been transitioning some institutional work and responsibilities (e.g. Indigenous policy work, curriculum work and IPEC secretarial duties to name a few) to the Special Advisor to the Provost and the emerging Office of Indigenous Initiatives.
- The Coordinator provided an overview of IS’s space, programs and services aimed to serve Indigenous undergrads and graduate students at Western.
- The Access Transition Opportunities (ATO) program continues to be a mainstay program targeting first and second year students in their transition to university where they get to participate in leadership development and connect with diverse Indigenous students from urban and/or First Nations across Canada.
- IS also supports Indigenous graduate students through the Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement (SAGE) program. This program is offered in partnership with the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) and involves the hiring of SAGE Coordinator every year. The SAGE program offers learning and peer support opportunities for graduate students to connect throughout the year (e.g. wellness circles and writing retreat)
- IS oversees a Visiting Elders program that offers supports to students and staff. Elders are available each week by appointment.
- The director shared how identity and disenfranchisement are real lived experiences among Indigenous students at Western and they bring with these experiences with them into the academy. She shared her own personal journey, and how Indigeneity is difficult to define, trace, authenticate and navigate for many Indigenous students due the impacts of colonization. She shared how IS plays a critical role in offering students a safe and open space to reconnect with their complex identities and foster community connections.
- It was announced that there are two Indigenous peoples on Senate in 2019-20. 1) Amanda Myers will be sitting on Senate as a graduate student representative and Riley Kennedy will be acting as an undergraduate student representative.

## **7. Indigenous Education Update**

by Brent Debassige, Director of Indigenous Education, Faculty of Education

### **Graduate level - Masters' Professional in Educational Leadership in Aboriginal Contexts (MPed)**

- The MPed program was founded in 2009 initiated at Walpole Island First Nation – first cohort in response to community needs. This program emerged from a community consultation with Walpole where the Faculty was hired to complete school evaluations and a recommendation was to develop a community-based program to train future generations of educational school leaders. The community wanted to see a Graduate Program in Education that came from an Indigenous epistemological stance.
- Since then, several other First Nations have partnered and hosted subsequent cohorts including: Kettle and Stoney Point, Oneida Nation of the Thames, Chippewa of the Thames First Nation and currently Six Nations of Grand River.
- The program serves primarily Indigenous students between 85 – 90% of students self-identify as Indigenous; however some non-Indigenous peoples do take the program because their work centers in Indigenous educational contexts. The program has observed a 100% graduation/completion rate, and 60 – 70% MPed graduates go on to take on leadership roles in First Nations communities, community organizations and higher learning institutions. Overall, alumna speak highly of program.

### **Preservice level - Bachelor of Education**

- For the last two years, the BEd program has offered a compulsory course on Indigenous education issues. This course was in place before but only as an elective until 2015.
- The role of the Director of Indigenous Education involves liaising with community and students, and overseeing the MPed program including advising on the recruitment of students and instructors.

### **Faculty level-Indigenous priorities**

- The Faculty of Education is deeply committed to Indigenous education. In their most recent, 5-year strategic vision Indigenization is listed as a key priority. This commitment involves establishing a leadership structure for Indigenous education that ensures that the Director reports to the Dean. This structure also involves creating an academic research structure specific to Indigenous programs.
- Many of the faculty and staff in other departments of the Faculty are also thinking about ways to incorporate Indigenous content into their programs and courses and so content is found in multiple areas.
- The Faculty is also committed to hiring Indigenous staff. They have had a part time staff position (currently vacant) dedicated to support Indigenous graduate students. There is hopes to transition this role from part-time to full-time in the coming months.
- Currently, there is no administrative support for the Director of Indigenous Education, the Faculty would like to address this issue in the future.
- The Faculty has an existing designated meeting space for Indigenous students and faculty. This meeting room is located in FEB room 1092 and students have 24-hour access with the room code number. Currently, the Faculty is exploring expanding its space in conversation to accommodate more incoming faculty members and staff.

### **Questions**

An IPEC member asked for more information about *why did the MPEd program change from Masters of Education to a Professional Masters?*

- The Director responded that the MPEd has always been a unique program designed for individuals with a professional growth in mind. The director explained that the current program carried over a component of research in the shift from MEd to MPEd in 2012? He stressed how a research focus is embedded within the course content and syllabus, and this means that students who wish to complete formal research (a thesis) are still supported to do so, but it is not a requirement of the program so not every student needs to do this. The Director explained that the majority of the students in the MPEd are not looking for research intensity but a professional program – and so this setup keeps the door open to both options professional and research future. Students who wish to do research must declare this early on to give instructors options to accommodate them though. The Director informed the group that some graduates have continued on to complete PhDs at Western and other institutions.
- An IPEC member noted that the tuition for a professional program is higher under the MPEd title. The Director recognized that this is indeed the case and indicated that he could not explain the rationale for this decision, as it was a Dean level decision to change the title of the program. One possible solution to this financial discrepancy is to create scholarships or funding grants for MPEd students.

## **8. General Discussion**

Co-chair Jody Noah opened up the floor for questions.

An IPEC participant asked *about mental health related services specifically related to Elders services and traditional healing practices such as sweat lodges.*

- The Director of Indigenous Services outlined the Visiting Elders program through Indigenous Services and how three Elders have regular office hours to meet with Indigenous students and staff individually on a monthly basis.
- As for the question of hosting ceremonies and sweat lodges on campus, it was acknowledged that this is a bigger conversation in terms of “how do we have ceremonies respectfully on campus?” The reality is that students are asking for this access, but it was also recognized that the university needs to approach this sensitively, and needs to have the right people (e.g. Elders or Traditional Teachers) stewarding the process and ongoing caretaking.
- The Wampum is a part of IS’s approach – the IS Wampum was spearheaded by students and is an active process that IS continues to honour through the co-creation of multiple belts. The IS Wampum is specifically not made with real quahog shells because IS does not have a caretaker in house, and takes caution with taking up ceremonial events or items. An ongoing question is “how can we facilitate and accommodate students’ requests for ceremonies?” The Director acknowledge that this is a question the university is pondering.
- It was recognized that Midewiwin and Longhouse ceremonies are close in proximity, and when IS can they have worked to help get students to those ceremonies by providing transportation. The Director said “one day we hope to have all these ceremonies on campus.”

An IPEC participant asked – *what types of Indigenous inclusion occurs during graduation ceremonies should Indigenous students wish to wear their cultural regalia?*

- The Special Advisor shared information about a set of guidelines that was written four years ago to support Indigenous students who wish to wear their own regalia and/or an Indigenous Service stole at graduation.
- The Coordinator of Indigenous Services elaborated on the annual Indigenous graduation ceremony hosted and organized by Indigenous Services every April. The Indigenous Services convocation stole are distributed to graduates at this time.

An IPEC member asked - *what is happening in the area of Indigenous athletics? Does Western support Indigenous varsity athletes and do they offer Indigenous intramural sports teams?*

- Director of Indigenous Services explained that intramurals are available to all Indigenous students, but interests shift from year to year. She explained that IS continues to remain responsive to student requests so this could be something to be explored.
- Another participant remarked how there was some recent interest among students to form a Lacrosse team along with a desire to teach origins of the game.
- Another participant remarked that Western does not do enough to acknowledge its Indigenous athletes. She shared that there have been “world class athletes that are Indigenous coming out of Western but it is not being recognized, recorded or documented”.

An IPEC member, asked – *what are the hiring qualifications to attain a tenure track faculty position, and does the MPEd program make this option possible?*

- The Director of the MPEd program explained how tenure track faculty positions are specifically research focused positions that consider many different factors as part of an overall academic record. PhDs are required for this type of role. At the same time, there may be other types of faculty appointments suitable for different people and situations (e.g. adjunct professors, sessional instructors, tenure track teaching stream).
- It was recognized that students need to develop multiple areas to be competitive for tenure track positions (e.g. teaching, service and publications).
- The Director explained how doctoral supervisors generally play a key role in supporting their individual PhD students in developing their CVs to be prepared and competitive for tenure track positions.
- It was also acknowledged that Western needs to do more to focus on producing more Indigenous PhD graduates. This type of support and academic programming calls for more thinking, strategy, undergrad to graduate student pathways and access programs.
- Another IPEC member commented on how certain PhD programs are particular with the type of Master’s program to be admitted. It was noted that transferring programs (MA into PhD) can also be challenging for students when institutions don’t understand the program content.
- An IPEC member reinforced her concern that there is not enough doctors coming out of Western and graduating, and they wanted to see Western work on this in the future. It was also highlighted that Indigenous students often feel burdened and overwhelmed by the institution



and professors as students are expected to be the experts in Indigenous content and curriculum in classrooms.

## **9. LUNCH**

### **10 Approval of Agenda**

- Agenda was approved

### **11. Approval of Minutes**

- Previous minutes were approved.

### **12. Introductions**

- Everyone in attendance introduced themselves and their role to Indigenous Education generally and at Western specifically.

### **13. IPEC Terms of Reference – Renewal/Updates and Membership Changes**

- The Co-Chairs advised the group that it was a best practice to review IPEC Terms of Reference annually. IPEC reviewed TOR in May 2018. The Committee proceeded to review them and provided feedback through consensus.
- Sections 1-4- no changes.
- Agreed to change “the Council” to “IPEC” throughout document for consistency.
- Question - is there an IPEC member that sits on the board or senate? Informed that there is currently no IPEC or Indigenous representation on the Board.
- Agreed to change all references from ‘Aboriginal’ to ‘Indigenous’ throughout the document.
- Agreed to create two separate lines for Indigenous Services positions. Administrative Coordinator and Director.
- Agreed to add Schulich Leader-in-Residence and Indigenous Relations Coordinator-USC to permanent member list.
- Agreed to invite 1 Dean to fill the vacancy. Suggestion to invite Dean of Social Science, Education or Law because of their connections to the TRC Calls to Action.
- Agreed to invite 1 senior leader part of the Provost’s Cabinet team.
- Agreed to add and invite Saugeen First Nation. Secretary will extend invitation to next meeting
- Agreed to add and invite Atlohsa to member list. Secretary will extend invitation to next meeting.
- Agreed to fill Affiliate vacancy. Noted that new member from Huron at the table this meeting.
- Agreed to invite Indigenous faculty members. While they may be busy it was noted that its important to allow for the right of first refusal. Special Advisor will discuss this with them at the next Indigenous faculty advisory.
- Agreed to add Western student representatives including SOGS Aboriginal Commission in addition to the two positions in attendance (e.g. ISA President and Indigenous Relations Liaison USC). This would raise student representation from 2 to 4 - two undergraduates and two graduates.

- Special Advisor raised the importance of making sure that the proportion of Western members does not exceed Indigenous community members.
- Change “the council to IPEC”
- There was much discussion around the meaning of “term”. Agreed that the word, ‘term’ apply to Co-chairs only, as limiting members to terms may cause a shortage of members in future. This way, the Co-Chair role could be a rotating position. The Office of Indigenous Initiatives will be responsible for the role of Secretary.
- Suggested to remove the bullet #9 altogether
- It is critical to automatically offer teleconference options every meeting.
- Agreed to have developed a digital IPEC archival record. The Office of Indigenous Initiatives will take the lead to gather all past documents and digitize them.

#### **14. Adjournment/Traditional Closing**

- Elder Mike Plain provided a traditional closing

#### **Action Items**

- Create scholarships or funding grants for MPEd students.
- Explore respectful and ethical ways to make traditional ceremonies more accessible to Indigenous students.
- Actively promote and share Convocation protocols that support Indigenous students wearing their traditional regalia and Indigenous stoles at graduation ceremonies.
- Recognize and celebrate Indigenous athletes more actively.
- Explore supports for Indigenous doctoral candidates/graduates.
- Make IPEC Terms of Reference changes and bring updated version to next meeting.
- Explore creating a digital archive of IPEC records.