

## 2018 Building Reconciliation Forum Final Report

The University of Victoria hosted the 2018 Building Reconciliation Forum on 15 and 16 November 2018 at the Songhees Wellness Centre in Esquimalt and on the University of Victoria's campus. The gathering attracted more than 200 participants, including Indigenous leaders and community members as well as representatives of post-secondary institutions from across Canada.

The Forum began in community following the protocols and foundational teachings of local Coastal Nations as a call for all participants to reflect on the meaning of this year's theme *Ts'its'u' watul tseep*, meaning to help one another. This is a message that universities must take to heart so that we work together to put our students' interests at the centre of what we do, to move beyond competition so that we can help one another to answer the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action specific to postsecondary education. We must work together with Indigenous communities, leaders and their governments to respond to the questions:

- How are universities and their partner institutions working together with Indigenous communities to answer the Calls to Action?
- What are the obstacles to answering the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action specific to postsecondary education?
- How can universities make a positive difference for Indigenous students and their communities?

This open access report captures the key themes that emerged from the discussions organised around the five Legacy Categories of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Report namely, child welfare, health, language and culture, education, and justice. The following sections of this open access report summarize key themes identified by Thought Leaders and topics discussed by participants.

### Thought Leaders Panel 1 – Child Welfare and Health

How can universities better support Indigenous children's health and wellbeing through academic programs and student support initiatives?

#### Thought Leaders:

- Susan Aglukark, OC, Arctic Rose Foundation, Founder and Director
- Dr. Jeannine Carriere, University of Victoria, School of Social Work

- Dr. Evan Adams, Chief Medical Officer, First Nations Health Authority, B.C.
- Aaron Franks, First Nations Information Governance Centre, Senior Manager, OCAP and Information Governance

**Key Themes:**

1. When creating educational programs, recognize the diverse backgrounds that students come from, including experiences of trauma. Provide them with a safe space – support, resources and time – to address their traumatic experience so that they can define and work towards their own goals for education and community relationships.
2. Most adopted Indigenous children are removed from their communities. This experience can be damaging to adopted Indigenous children. The Canadian Association of Social Work Education requires social workers and parents of adopted Indigenous children to develop a cultural plan that allows children to grow up aware of their cultural identity. Social workers need education and professional development training about the importance of developing and administering effective cultural plans to support children’s cultural identity.
3. Past child welfare policy and practice undermined the cohesion of Indigenous families, and continues to have inter-generational impact on Indigenous health and well-being. Education needs to equip non-Indigenous professionals working in the areas of health and child and youth care, among others, with knowledge about residential schools and other colonizing practices that continue to impact Indigenous families and children. Universities also need to support the preparation of Indigenous professionals in the areas of social work, child and youth care, nursing and medicine among other areas responsible for child and family health and wellbeing.
4. Work in partnership with Indigenous communities and their leadership to conduct research about child welfare and Indigenous health in ways that are respectful of, and useful to, Indigenous communities. There must be reciprocity in all research so that Indigenous communities benefit from research about them.

**Feedback from Discussion Tables about how universities can better support Indigenous children’s welfare and health through education programs and student support:**

- Provide resources for students to work with their own and other Indigenous communities to reclaim their identity, language and culture. Provide opportunities for sharing, mentorship and leadership among students and communities to address traumatic experiences and to promote wellbeing and health.

- Connect universities with Indigenous communities, for example, Knowledge Keepers and Elders, to lessen the divide between institutions and Indigenous communities and support students to work through previous traumatic experiences.
- Create a community-owned pharmacy near reserves with practical rotations from pharmacy schools and for co-op business students. This will bring research opportunities as well as a reimbursement structure.
- Restructure programs to be more supportive of the learning goals of Indigenous communities. For example, community-based programs provide opportunities for parents to remain in community with their children while studying.
- Structure programs to identify a variety of entrance and exit points that enable adult learners, particularly parents, to complete their studies in stages while fulfilling their family responsibilities. For example, “laddered” programs should provide a credential after completion of a certificate or diploma program that subsequently will count towards a Bachelor-level degree credential in order to create greater opportunity for those with family responsibilities.
- Review policies with negative impacts not only in the past but also in the present on Indigenous people, including children of parents who are students as well as young adults in high school, and then identify how best to address those impacts.
- Develop pedagogies and extracurricular programs that build learners’ confidence, especially for adult learners who may have struggled in the educational system when they were children or youth. Create opportunities for success and redefine what “success” looks like for adult learners.
- In order to support the health and wellbeing of Indigenous students, ensure they see themselves reflected in what they study:
  - Create Indigenous “spaces” within programs, for example by developing sections of classes specifically for cohorts of Indigenous students who together can support one another and engage with others as mentors.
  - Include Indigenous peoples’ experience and their history (e.g., about the impacts of the foster care system or residential schools) in courses and programs.
  - Build students’ connections to the Indigenous community on campus and in the local region where they study.

- Work with allies and advocates among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty to support curriculum change and inclusiveness at universities.
- Identify a person responsible to liaise between university research offices and Indigenous communities to support better communication and stronger relationships to apply for Tri-Agency funding for projects of mutual benefit.

### Resources:

Arctic Rose Foundation [www.arcticrose.org](http://www.arcticrose.org)

Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE-ACSTF) Reconciliation Resources  
<https://caswe-acfts.ca/reconciliation/>

Government of Canada Child Welfare Learn how the Government of Canada is responding to the TRC's Calls to Action 1 to 5  
<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1524494379788/1524494815580>

Associations of Faculties of Medicine of Canada Report on Indigenous Health Needs  
<https://afmc.ca/medical-education/indigenous-health-needs>

Health Care CAN Bringing Reconciliation to Healthcare in Canada  
[http://www.healthcarecan.ca/wp-content/themes/camyno/assets/document/Reports/2018/HCC/EN/TRCC\\_EN.pdf](http://www.healthcarecan.ca/wp-content/themes/camyno/assets/document/Reports/2018/HCC/EN/TRCC_EN.pdf)

The College of Family Physicians of Canada Health and Health Care Implications of Systemic Racism on Indigenous Peoples in Canada  
[https://www.cfpc.ca/uploadedFiles/Resources/PDFs/SystemicRacism\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.cfpc.ca/uploadedFiles/Resources/PDFs/SystemicRacism_ENG.pdf)

First Nations Information Governance Centre <https://fnigc.ca/ocap.html>

First Nations Data Centre <https://fnigc.ca/fndc>

National Report on the First Nations Regional Health Survey: Phase 3 Volume 2  
[https://fnigc.ca/sites/default/files/docs/fnigc\\_rhs\\_phase\\_3\\_volume\\_two\\_en\\_final\\_screen.pdf](https://fnigc.ca/sites/default/files/docs/fnigc_rhs_phase_3_volume_two_en_final_screen.pdf)

Canadian Nurse Priorities and Partnerships in Indigenous Nursing  
<https://www.canadian-nurse.com/en/articles/issues/2018/may-june-2018/priorities-and-partnerships-in-indigenous-nursing>

Canadian Indigenous Nurses Association <http://indigenousnurses.ca/>

## Thought Leaders Panel 2 – Language and Culture

How can universities work with communities to accelerate Indigenous language revitalization, proficiency and fluency?

### Thought Leaders:

- STOLØEL Elder John Elliott, First Peoples' Cultural Foundation
- Dr. Peter Jacobs, Simon Fraser University, Department of Linguistics
- Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule, University of Victoria, Department of Indigenous Education

### Key Themes:

1. Let Indigenous communities lead when developing language programs. Recognize knowledge resides in Indigenous communities. Because of the shaming of Indigenous language speakers in residential schools, residential school survivors and their communities need the opportunity to work through this damaging experience. As a result, Indigenous languages cannot be taught in the same way as Spanish, Italian or other languages.
2. Indigenous language programs must be based in the relationship of language and culture. Language Nest Programs, for example, create new language speakers by creating language and cultural immersion environments for preschool age children and their parents to become fluent in the languages of their First Nations. This kind of program immerses young children in language, encourages parents to participate, and engages Elders who act as teachers by carrying out daily activities in the language with the children.
3. We cannot take away the language loss caused by the residential school system but we can work to develop new opportunities for language learning among adults. Learning to speak an Indigenous language is not just a book-learning exercise: the language needs to be spoken in everyday activities, such as speaking to children, praying, discussing the weather and how things are going, through to discussing history and philosophy, and conducting business and political matters. This kind of experience can be included in language programs to build language skills.

### Feedback from Discussion Tables about how universities can work with communities to accelerate Indigenous language revitalization and proficiency:

- Change university norms for language programs to focus more on the cultural functions of language.

- Increase partnerships between universities and Tribal Colleges to provide more opportunities for recognition of, and university credit for, community-based language learning.
- Create a network of language centres across universities and Indigenous communities, including Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Associations (IAHLAs) and Tribal Colleges, to promote language revitalization, proficiency and fluency.
- Fund language revitalisation and other language programs for long-term sustainability on campus and in community.
- Tap into Indigenous Advisory Councils and Boards across university departments, such as those for Departments of Child and Youth Care, Social Work, and Law Schools, who can provide knowledge and advice about the relationship of language and culture as well as their importance to children, youth and adult learners.
- Create more experiential language learning, including songs, stories, nature walks, community-based courses, to support understanding of the relationship of language and culture.
- Universities need to help in three areas:
  - Research: determining research agendas with communities.
  - Teaching: hiring proficient language speakers to teach.
  - Service: creating Indigenous communities on campus (e.g., Elders in residence).
- Partner with Friendship Centres and urban Indigenous hubs to support and engage urban language learners and teachers who have been displaced from their communities.
- Eliminate barriers to access by providing bursaries that offset costs of accommodation, travel and food when distance education students travel to complete intensive, on-campus sessions for a course.

## Resources

National Report on the First Nations Regional Health Survey: Phase 3 Volume 2 Chapter 3:  
Language and Culture

[https://fnigc.ca/sites/default/files/docs/fnigc\\_rhs\\_phase\\_3\\_volume\\_two\\_en\\_final\\_screen.pdf](https://fnigc.ca/sites/default/files/docs/fnigc_rhs_phase_3_volume_two_en_final_screen.pdf)

Statistics Canada Census in Brief The Aboriginal Languages of First Nations people, Métis and Inuit <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016022/98-200-x2016022-eng.cfm>

Macleans Magazine “How Canadian Universities are Responding to the TRC Calls to Action” <https://www.macleans.ca/education/how-canadian-universities-are-responding-to-the-trcs-calls-to-action/>

First Peoples’ Cultural Council First Voices

<https://www.firstvoices.com/explore/FV/sections/Data/THE%20SENĆOŦEN%20LANGUAGE/SENĆOŦEN/SENĆOŦEN>

### Thought Leaders Panel 3 – Education, Entrepreneurship and Socio-economic Capacity Building

How can universities work in sincere partnership with Indigenous communities to build not only business expertise but also socio-economic capacity?

#### **Thought Leaders:**

- Dr. Rick Colbourne, University of Northern British Columbia, Adjunct Professor
- Dr. Brent Mainprize, University of Victoria, Gustavson School of Business
- Lianna Spence, Lax Kw’alaams, Indigenous artist

#### **Key Themes:**

1. Universities have a responsibility to allow Indigenous communities to become empowered on their own terms and by their own values. Western business norms have been and remain globally complicit in colonization. Bring that history into the classroom. Teach business, entrepreneurialism and economic development in a way that avoids recolonizing and re-assimilating students.
2. Consult extensively with communities about their objectives and ideas of success when developing programs. Begin with the knowledge within the community to create programs and learning outcomes that enable self-determination and empowerment so that individuals and members of a community reach their goals.
3. Incorporate Indigenous understandings of business and entrepreneurship into programs to better support students and communities in attaining their educational and business goals.

4. Education in entrepreneurship can build resilience not only of individuals but also of a culture. Education can change the life of an individual who in turn uplifts her or his culture and community.

**Feedback from Discussion Tables about how universities can partner with communities to build business expertise and socio-economic capacity.**

- Enable university procurement policies to use Indigenous providers and services. Link universities' procurement policies for venues, catering, thank you gifts, etc., to Indigenous communities' venues and big houses, artists and artisans.
- Work on community's terms. Let community drive the agenda. Universities need to recognise that they do not need to come in with an agenda. Listen to Indigenous communities and build an agenda together.
- Consider new ways to give communities access to teaching other than traditional degree programs. For example, non-degree entrepreneurship and professional development programs may better support the economic goals of communities.
- Honour the economic plans and goals of Indigenous communities as ultimately education comes back to the lives and needs of the people in a community.
- Recognise the thousands of years of trade and treaty experience that Indigenous people have and bring that into the classroom.
- Implement a mandatory course in Business programs to incorporate community engagement in the education of students who will work with Indigenous communities and First Nations. Build students' understanding that development and commerce are not motivated solely by profit.
- Provide business training for newly elected Chief and Council, especially as related to Federal funding agreements.
- Build upon the experiential learning styles of Indigenous peoples. Business is often a side-product of what they are doing (e.g., land stewardship or advocacy).
- Create partnerships with Indigenous companies locally, nationally and internationally so that they can be involved in academic programs not only as case studies but also by providing mentors, investors, paid work terms and internships.



- Make community business needs a priority by making an institutional commitment to provide resources (e.g., people, time, funding).
- Acknowledge the tension in business education between knowledge transfer and capacity building created by colonial and colonizing practices.
- Respect communities' distributed models of decision making and authority. Recognize communities' business practices involving liaison and consultation although time-consuming should be respected. Universities and foundations must engage in consultation prior to developing programs.

### **Resources:**

Indigenous Works TRC Calls to Action

<https://indigenousworks.ca/en/partnership/what-does-intersection-mean/trc-call-action>

The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation Insights & Observations at the Intersection of Higher Education, Indigenous Communities and Local Economic Development

[https://prismic-io.s3.amazonaws.com/recode%2F3472d811-cefe-460c-b18a-b91031ad5b35\\_recode\\_dialogue\\_insightsrv2017-final.pdf](https://prismic-io.s3.amazonaws.com/recode%2F3472d811-cefe-460c-b18a-b91031ad5b35_recode_dialogue_insightsrv2017-final.pdf)

SSHRC Towards a successful shared future for Canada

<http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/society-societe/community-communite/ifca-iac/03-aboriginal-peoples-in-Canada-report-les-peuples-autochtones-en-Canada-rapport-eng.aspx>

Thought Leaders Panel 4 – Education and Justice

How can legal education promote justice and greater understanding of Indigenous legal orders?

### **Thought Leaders:**

- Dr. John Borrows, University of Victoria, Faculty of Law
- Louise Mandell, QC, Vancouver Island University, Chancellor
- The Honourable Steven Point, OBC

### **Key Themes:**

1. Recognize that Indigenous communities have customary ways of working to resolve conflicts. Indigenous legal customs can complement Canadian common law, which does not always provide the only or best resolution for a conflict.
2. As educators, we must establish a process for Indigenous communities to identify what their laws are in historic terms, and what they could be today. The goal should be to create legal institutions that are transparent, accountable and that harmonize with other laws in the country. This will benefit child welfare, health, education, housing, and resource development for Indigenous communities.
3. With 150 years of repression of Indigenous people in Canada, it can be difficult to apply Indigenous law in contemporary circumstances. The study of Indigenous legal traditions is about their revitalization and creating pathways out of an era of control into an era of shared autonomy and responsibility. Study of Indigenous legal orders involves historical and critical evaluation of the law just as the study of Canadian common law does.
4. Law and justice require relationships among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to generate change and build intercultural understanding. Reconciliation is about how we hold each other up, recognize the knowledge we don't have and recognize the needs of each other.

**Feedback from Discussion Tables about how universities can promote justice through innovative legal education:**

- Avoid polarizing western and Indigenous ways. Laws and legal principles are present in both but often we focus only on western law.
- Create opportunities for reciprocal learning. Universities need to indicate their respect by learning about Indigenous cultures and sincerely engaging in reciprocal learning so that programs and courses include accurate, meaningful and useful content to ensure better education for non-Indigenous and Indigenous professionals working with Indigenous children, youth and families.
- Include experiential learning, including songs, stories, and community-based courses, in programs about Indigenous legal orders.
- Recognize communities have vital knowledge and an epistemic advantage to identify priorities and culturally appropriate practices for education, research and partnerships related to new academic programs about justice and legal orders.

- Make university a path for receiving information from communities. Build processes to utilise that knowledge.
- Create partnerships with Indigenous communities locally, nationally and internationally so that they can be involved in law programs not only as case studies but also by providing mentors and resources.
- Make communities' access to legal services a priority by making an institutional commitment to provide resources (e.g., people, time, funding).
- Identify measures of success for law programs that are meaningful to communities and students, not only the university.
- Acknowledge the tension between knowledge transfer and capacity building in legal education created by colonial and colonizing practices.

#### **Resources:**

The Advocates Society, The Indigenous Bar Association and The Law Society of Ontario "Guide for Lawyers working with Indigenous Peoples"

[https://www.advocates.ca/Upload/Files/PDF/Advocacy/BestPracticesPublications/Guide\\_for\\_Lawyers\\_Working\\_with\\_Indigenous\\_Peoples\\_may16.pdf](https://www.advocates.ca/Upload/Files/PDF/Advocacy/BestPracticesPublications/Guide_for_Lawyers_Working_with_Indigenous_Peoples_may16.pdf)

Banks, Kerry. "The Rise of Aboriginal Law." University Affairs/Affaires Universitaires (Sept. 5, 2018) <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/the-rise-of-aboriginal-law/>

Mandell Pinder LLP Barristers and Solicitors Case Summaries Aboriginal Rights and Title

<http://www.mandellpinder.com/category/rights-title/>

The Court.ca Category Aboriginal Law

<http://www.thecourt.ca/category/aboriginal-law/>

University of Victoria Libraries Indigenous Law / Indigenous Legal Traditions

<https://libguides.uvic.ca/c.php?g=690509&p=4883291>

## Moving forward on the Calls to Action

On 15 November 2018, the University of Victoria received the Walking Stick that symbolizes the goals of the Building Reconciliation Forum. The university will host the Walking Stick until the 2019 forum next fall when it will be presented to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. The University of Victoria will create a new symbol for the Building Reconciliation Forum and present it at the 2019 forum to be hosted by Algoma University, the Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig Institute, Cape Breton University, Nipissing University, and the University of Northern British Columbia.

The Walking Stick was created specifically as a symbol for the work to be done by universities hosting the Building Reconciliation Forum. When the University of Saskatchewan hosted the Forum in 2015, its Chancellor Blaine Favel tasked the National Circle of Residential School Survivors to create a symbol of the commitment that post-secondary institutions were making to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action. Elder Eugene Arcand commissioned an artist to create the Walking Stick. Lodge Keeper Wallace Fox of the Onion Lake Cree Nation, a First Nation that spans Saskatchewan and Alberta, made the Walking Stick that is “a companion, a protector, and an educational tool in pow-wow circles.”<sup>1</sup> Blaine Favel, who passed the Walking Stick to the University of Alberta during the 2016 forum, explained, “The walking stick is a symbol of gathering and truth telling ... this gift is given as representatives from across the country gather in Edmonton to discuss this matter that affects us all: reconciliation between Indigenous people and Canada.”<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, the Walking Stick was passed to the University of Manitoba. Each of the four universities who have hosted the forum has a beaded crest on the Walking Stick that represents their commitment to reconciliation.

Elder Eugene Arcand presented the Walking Stick to the University of Victoria. In accordance with Coast Salish protocol, Elder Arcand was part of a procession drummed into the opening ceremony for the forum so that he could officially pass the Walking Stick to the university. He instructed the university about the teachings of the Walking Stick, specifically to use the Walking Stick at gatherings, meetings, conferences or as a teaching tool. He encouraged us to touch and hold the Walking Stick, to take pictures of it, and make sure it is visible throughout the university. He said the commitment to reconciliation does not rest with one office or person but instead with the university at large so the Walking Stick should not just be stored in one office for the year. The Walking Stick is cared for within the First Peoples House at the University of Victoria by the Office of Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement.

Further information about the Walking Stick is available at:

<https://aboriginal.usask.ca/building-reconciliation/national-forum.php>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.thenav.ca/2018/11/23/uvic-hosts-building-reconciliation-forum/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.eaglefeathernews.com/news/index.php?detail=2363>

The 2018 Building Reconciliation Forum encouraged participants to share the lessons universities have learned since 2015, when the first Building Reconciliation Forum was held. These included lessons about

- how to remove obstacles to addressing Indigenous communities' priorities and goals in areas such as children's wellbeing, health, language revitalization and justice,
- how to work in sincere partnership with Indigenous communities, and
- how to create greater access to postsecondary education for Indigenous students.

Discussions during the 2018 Forum advanced understanding of universities' responsibility to harness their capabilities to help mend the negative impacts on Indigenous peoples of our colonial history and to work towards a better shared future. The 2018 forum provided a critical opportunity to foster engagement among peer institutions and Indigenous communities across Canada and to act in partnership to advance reconciliation.

The traditional teachings of the Coast Salish nations on whose traditional lands the University of Victoria resides tell us to "bring in your good feelings", "work together" and "be prepared for the work to come." These are important words of guidance that universities must take to heart, so that we collaborate with Indigenous communities, acknowledge their leadership and work to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Our immediate goal must be realizing opportunities for Indigenous students now through sincere partnerships with Indigenous communities, Indigenous governing bodies and federal and regional governments across Canada.

Much has been done by universities over a period of many years; all universities can point to achievements in advancing reconciliation through education. In its 2017 survey Universities Canada found since 2013 there has been a 55% increase in the number of academic programs with an Indigenous focus or designed for Indigenous students. Over half of universities in Canada now offer Indigenous language courses, and a growing number of non-language courses are offered with an Indigenous language as the language of instruction. These initiatives, particularly those that address the TRC Commission Report's Legacy Category of Language and Culture, are of primary importance to the wellbeing and health of Indigenous people and their communities.

Much remains to be done, a fact brought into sharp focus by discussion at the 2018 Building Reconciliation Forum. Over the two days of the forum, participants reflected on the role each person can, and must, play in building the country for the future through committing ourselves to both truth and reconciliation.

**Resources:**

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada – Calls to Action

<https://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Calls to Action English2.pdf>

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Questionnaire

<https://www.uvic.ca/vpacademic/assets/docs/indigenousacademicplan/UVicResponsetoTRCFindingsQuestionnaire.pdf>

Universities Canada Principles on Indigenous Education

<https://www.univcan.ca/media-room/media-releases/universities-canada-principles-on-indigenous-education/>

Council of Canadian Colleges' Principles on Indigenous Education

<https://www.collegesinstitutes.ca/policyfocus/indigenous-learners/protocol/>

Universities Canada Advancing Reconciliation through Higher Education 2017 Survey Findings (April 2018)

<https://www.univcan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/indigenous-advancing-reconciliation-through-higher-education-2017-survey-findings-april-2018.pdf>