MEMORANDUM

Office of the Provost
and Vice-Principal (Academic)

To: Queen’s University Senate
From: T Shearer, Deputy Provost (Academic Operations and Inclusion)
Date: September 19, 2017
Subject: Truth and Reconciliation Commission Task Force Progress Update

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Task Force (TRCTF) completed its final report in March 2017. The report contains 25 recommendations for sustained institutional change, including strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities, promoting a deeper understanding of Indigenous histories, knowledge systems, and perspectives, and creating a welcoming environment for Indigenous faculty, staff, and students at Queen’s.

This update highlights examples of activities and initiatives underway which support the implementation of the TRCTF recommendations:

Faculty and shared services implementation plans
Implementation of the TRCTF recommendations will require engagement from units across the university. As recommended by the task force, individual faculties and shared service units have been asked to develop a response to the recommendations that are relevant to their portfolios, along with a preliminary five-year implementation plan, by December 2017.

Establishment of a Director of Indigenous Initiatives position
To ensure there is centralized coordination of Indigenous focused initiatives at Queen’s, and in line with a key task force recommendation, the position of Director of Indigenous Initiatives has been established (Recommendation 3). The mandate of the position is to:

- advance Indigenous initiatives at Queen’s
- build relationships and foster reciprocal partnerships with Indigenous communities
- promote an understanding of Indigenous histories, knowledge systems, and perspectives within the Queen’s community
- provide guidance and support in Indigenous education and advance positive learning experiences for Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students, and
- support researchers engaging with Indigenous peoples and communities
The search for the inaugural Director of Indigenous Initiatives is well underway. Reporting to the Deputy Provost (Academic, Operations and Inclusion), the Director will play a major role in establishing and fostering positive relationships with Indigenous communities, engaging with external stakeholders to enhance the profile of the university’s Indigenous initiatives, supporting the implementation of the TRCTF recommendations, and engaging with faculty, staff, students, and external stakeholders to drive progress on Indigenous initiatives across the university.

**Funding allocation**

Over the next three years, one time funding of $3M has been earmarked for implementation of recommendations arising from the PICRDI and TRCTF reports. This funding will be used to support existing, and launch new, initiatives related to equity, diversity, and intercultural awareness.

**Intercultural awareness certificate**

Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre and the Queen’s University International Centre (QUIC) within the Division of Student Affairs have partnered to offer an Intercultural Awareness Certificate for staff, faculty, and students. The certificate consists of five workshops which cover topics including concepts of intercultural learning, the cultural self, dimensions of culture, the Intercultural Development Continuum, and Indigenous rights history through the KAIROS Blanket Exercise and Cultural Safety training. The workshops are meant to promote an inclusive campus community, and respectful interactions among individuals with diverse perspectives and backgrounds **(Recommendation 23 & 24)**.

**Indigenous Cultural Safety Training**

Many senior administrative offices have completed, or are in the process of completing, the Indigenous cultural safety training workshops **(Recommendation 2.1 & 24)**. These workshops are facilitated by Laura Maracle, Aboriginal Cultural Safety Coordinator at Queen’s. From September 2016-April 2017, 30 Cultural Safety workshops were delivered to 1,226 participants and 35 KAIROS Blanket Exercises delivered to 1,172 students, staff, faculty, and community members. The Aboriginal Cultural Safety Coordinator position has been expanded, effective September 2017, from an eight-month position to full-time, year-round appointment.

As always, a presentation from a Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre staff member was included in the new faculty orientation programming to help promote awareness of the Indigenous community at Queen’s.
Expansion of Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre

Work is underway to expand Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre (FDASC) and increase capacity for gathering spaces, ceremonies, and workshops for Aboriginal students (Recommendation 13). Currently located at 146 Barrie Street, the existing space will expand to encompass the adjacent building located at 144 Barrie Street. The additional building has 2,170 square feet of usable program space, meaning that the FDASC will almost double in size.

In conjunction with this work, which is funded by the Division of Student Affairs, accessibility upgrades to both buildings are underway which have been made possible through a $50,000 grant from the federal government’s Enabling Accessibility Fund, with matching funds from the university. These upgrades will ensure students, staff, faculty, and community members can easily access FDASC and participate in their many community events and activities.

2017 Queen’s National Scholar (QNS) appointments advance Indigenous scholarship

Two of the 2017 QNS appointments will contribute significantly to Queen’s scholarship in Indigenous studies (Recommendation 14 & 15).

- Dr. Isabelle St-Amand was appointed as a QNS in Aboriginal and Migrant Literatures in the Departments of French Studies and Languages, Literatures and Cultures.
- Dr. Michael Doxtater will join the Departments of Languages, Literatures and Cultures and Global Development Studies as a QNS in Indigenous Studies, Land- and Language-Based Pedagogies and Practices.

Indigenous academic programming

As previously announced, two Indigenous language certificate programs are in development: a Certificate in Indigenous Languages and Cultures and a Certificate in Mohawk Language and Culture, offered in partnership with Tsi Tyónnheht Onkwawén:na Language and Cultural Centre in Tyendinaga (Recommendation 22.1).

As always, the Principle’s Dream Courses initiative will continue to focus on the theme of Indigenous identities, including exploring themes of indigeneity, nationally or globally.

Transition support for undergraduate and graduate Indigenous students

Beginning in fall 2017, Indigenous and non-Indigenous students can choose to live in the new Bimaadiziwin Ka’nikonhriyo Indigenous & Allies Living Learning Community (LLC) in the
Chown Hall residence. LLCs are floors or clusters of rooms where students with similar interests live together. With an emphasis on intercultural understanding and leadership development, the Bimaadiziwin Ka'nikonhriyo LLC welcomes both Indigenous and non-Indigenous student allies who are interested in learning more about Indigenous peoples, traditions, and cultures as it impacts them as individuals and as community members. This initiative is a partnership between FDASC and Residence Life.

For several years, Queen’s has offered incoming undergraduate Indigenous students an early move-in and welcome day that builds connections and links students and families to campus and community supports.

Queen’s continues to offer culturally tailored transition and student support services for undergraduate and graduate Indigenous students, including academic support, wellness services, and social programming offered through FDASC. Examples of Indigenous focused student support services include peer mentorship programs, and access to an Aboriginal Advisor and Elders. In addition, a new cultural counsellor position is being established in Four Directions (Recommendation 10).

**Indigenous student pathways**

Queen’s has joined the ‘Pathways for Indigenous Learners’ collective to develop bridging and pathways programming and ‘wrap around support services’ for Indigenous learners across all sectors of the post-secondary education sector: university, college, Aboriginal Institutes. Articulation agreements developed within this project will allow for the seamless transition of Indigenous learners across the sector (Recommendation 8).

**Building a climate of inclusion and recognition**

The 2017-18 Queen’s Reads program will focus on “The Break”, a novel by Katherena Vermette that tells an intergenerational story of members of a Métis family as they navigate the effects of trauma. The Queen’s Reads program is designed to engage members of the Queen’s community in a dialogue around, “difference and diversity in connection with our own identities, reflecting on stories of resiliency, identifying the internal and external skills, strengths and resources that we draw on in overcoming adversity.” Students can pick up a free copy of the book from several locations on campus. All members of the Queen’s community – students, faculty and staff – are encouraged to attend facilitated discussions and activities related to the novel’s themes. The initiative promotes a broader climate of inclusion and support (Recommendation 23).

For several years, the university has offered to publicly gift graduating self-identified Indigenous students with a Pendleton Creation blanket at their convocation ceremony. This initiative recognizes student achievement and gives these students an opportunity to be visible role models to future generations of Indigenous learners.

The Cultural Awareness and Programming working group of the Aboriginal Council of
Queen’s University (ACQU) has been developing text and images for a multi-page plinth to be installed on University Avenue. The plinth will detail the history of the territory upon which Queen’s sits. Additional Indigenous spaces on campus include 12 Indigenous-named rooms in Stauffer Library, and a lounge in the Student Life Centre.

**Advancement strategies for Indigenous initiatives**
The Deputy Provost (Academic Operations and Inclusion) has requested that the Faculties, Schools, and the Division of Student Affairs identify initiatives related to the TRC recommendations where philanthropic support would be required. The Office of Advancement will then work with the Deputy Provost (Academic Operations and Inclusion) to identify priority areas for philanthropic support and the advancement team will begin engaging with donors (Recommendation 4).

**Government engagement**
Principal Daniel Woolf met with a number of government officials federally and provincially to highlight the TRCTF report and Queen’s Indigenous-focused initiatives in response to the TRCTF report and the broader themes of reconciliation (Recommendation 5). These meetings included individuals in:

**Federally**
- Prime Minister’s Office (members of the policy team)
- Privy Council Office (Deputy Secretary with responsibility for Indigenous issues)
- Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (Director General level meeting)

**Provincially**
- MAESD (including Minister Matthews, and ADM Glenn Craney)
- Ministry of Indigneous Relations and Reconciliation (Including Minister Zimmer, and Sophie Kiwala, MPP and Zimmer’s Parliamentary Assistant)
- Opposition – NDP critic for Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation