

## **Indigenous Directions 2018-2019 Year-End Report**

Prepared by Linda Teoli and Victoria Cooke (June 2019)

It was an exciting year for the Indigenous Directions Leadership Group (IDLG). Established in 2016 with a three-year mandate to explore, identify, and recommend priority areas in which Concordia University could improve its responsiveness to the Truth and Reconciliation's Principles of Reconciliation and Calls to Action, the IDLG was responsible for the preparation of an Action Plan Report. When we published last year's report in June 2018, we were confident that the Indigenous Directions Action Plan would be ready in the fall. In the end, it was launched after many months of deliberation on March 13, 2019, to the internal community and on April 4, 2019, to the public. It took a huge collective effort to accomplish this goal, but the result was a document that reflects the energy and passion of those who contributed to its creation.

There are many people to thank for their support and contributions towards making this project a reality. To Ossie Michelin, Charmaine Lyn, and Marie-Ève Drouin-Gagné for their efforts in putting together the first drafts of the Action Plan following the consultations. To Heather Igloliorte and Donna Kahérakwas Goodleaf, who took the Action Plan under their wings and massaged the message until it was accurate, clear and concise. Let us not forget the immeasurable contributions from all the IDLG members, and more specifically from Tiffany Ashoona and Victoria Cooke, without whom the Action Plan would be on the shelf collecting dust, an unfulfilled dream. This was a tremendous undertaking and now it is the intention of Indigenous Directions, through the dissemination of the Action Plan, to 'communicate the need for Concordia University to continue to engage in Indigenous issues, to foster meaningful change through collaboration, and to make a positive difference by implementing the recommendations proposed in the Plan.'

### **Highlights and Accomplishments**

#### **2018**

In April, the IDLG hosted two events with Indigenous students, staff and faculty as part of the Action Plan's validation and approval process.

In May, Tiffany Ashoona returned to her position as Project Coordinator and it was time to say 'au revoir' to Charlie O'Connor who occupied the position during Tiffany's maternity leave. Charlie received thanks for his hard work and dedication. He travelled during the summer and returned to the IDLG in September.

In June, Dr. Heather Igloliorte received \$2,499,774 in SSHRC funding to increase Inuit presence in the arts.

The IDLG held its Summer Social on August 8. Members of the IDLG gathered for a holiday get-together on December 17.

In the fall, Donna Kahérakwas Goodleaf developed and hosted a Seminar Series on Decolonizing and Indigenizing the Academy; Dr. Heather Igloliorte co-curated the *Among All These Tundras* exhibit; Faye Mullen and Laurence Lainesse were hired as student mentors at the Aboriginal Student Resource Center; and on September 28, the day of the Concordia Shuffle, people wore their 'Orange Shirt' to increase awareness about the history of residential schools.

In October, Dr. Heather Igloliorte was appointed Special Advisor to the Provost on Advancing Indigenous Knowledges.

## **2019**

In January, William Lindsay started in his new position as Senior Director of Indigenous Directions. Dr. Heather Igloliorte and Nadia Myre both received \$50K for Indigenous research capacity and reconciliation activities.

In February, during the First Voices Week welcoming event, an important document entitled *Indigenous Elder and Community Protocols* was launched. This document provides guidelines for acknowledging territory, as well as protocols when working with Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community members. A special note of appreciation went out to Wahéhshon Shiann Whitebean for her invaluable insight and contribution to this extremely important document.

After several discussions amongst the members of the IDLG, there was consensus for the naming of the office - the Office of Indigenous Directions. The Office of Indigenous Directions, headed by the Senior Director, is the administrative body that helps to execute the mandate of the IDLG.

The Action Plan was officially launched to the internal university community on March 13, 2019; it was introduced to the public on April 4, 2019. Both events were extremely well received.

Dr. Heather Igloliorte announced the establishment of \$300,000 in scholarships for incoming Indigenous Grad and PhD students; this amount will increase to \$600,000 over the next three years.

Indigenous Directions sought the assistance of a facilitator and Concordia alumni, Jeffrey Basque from Listuguj to moderate the discussions on the new Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Indigenous Directions Leadership Council (IDLC). Due to scheduling conflicts, the members of the IDLG were divided into two groups, one that convened on June 4 and the other on June 10. Much progress was made towards defining the philosophy and guiding principles to be included in the final version of the ToR. With the completion of this document, the Indigenous Directions Leadership Group will officially transition to the Indigenous Directions Leadership Council (IDLC).

## **Gratitude**

In 2018, the IDLG said farewell to two members, Professor Karl Hele and Chad Cowie. Veronica Lefebvre replaced Chad Cowie as the Indigenous Student Recruitment Officer, and has been a wonderful addition to the IDLC team. In early 2019, William Lindsay became the new Senior Director of the Office of Indigenous Directions. More changes are on the horizon in the Office of Indigenous Directions as William had to resign to tend to personal matters back in Vancouver, BC. Tiffany Ashoona, our long-time Project Coordinator, decided to pursue her studies and left her post in July 2019. We are grateful for Tiffany's vision and dedication to this work, and will miss seeing her around the office. Victoria Cooke has taken up the role of interim Project Coordinator and will continue to offer Communications support, and Linda Teoli will continue her work as IDLC's Administrative Assistant while the search for a new Senior Director is underway.

Here is a list in alphabetical order of the IDLG's members (16) who were active during the academic year:

Ronald Abraira, Tiffany Ashoona, Vicky Boldo, Victoria Cooke, Orenda Boucher-Curotte, Brooke Wahsontiiostha Deer, Marie-Ève Drouin-Gagné, Donna Kahérakwas Goodleaf, Heather Igloliorte, Veronica Lefebvre, Jason Edward Lewis, William Lindsay, Charmaine Lyn, Charlie O'Connor, Geneviève Sioui, and Wahéhshon Shiann Whitebean.

Monthly meetings were held on the following dates:

**2018** - September 27, November 15, and December 4.

**2019** - January 17, February 21, March 21, April 18, and May 16.

## Getting the Word Out

The **Indigenous Elder and Community Protocols** guidebook, launched in February 2019 at the First Voices Week opening event, is an excellent tool that offers best practices for engaging with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members.

It is our hope that the publication of the **Action Plan** (both the online and printed versions) will have a significant impact on how the university views Indigenous faculty, staff and students and will lead to positive change at Concordia. The implementation of the Action Plan's recommendations is the next phase of the process.

Contact information for Indigenous connections at Concordia University is available in the **Kahnawake Telephone Directory**, produced by The Eastern Door.

## Financial Support

Through both the Indigenous Directions Fund and the Elder Fund, the IDLG provided financial support to projects that advance the IDLG's mandate by building mutually beneficial relationships between Concordia and First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and other Indigenous communities. Below are a few examples of the projects that were eligible for and received IDLG funding during the 2018-2019 academic year:

- Professor Ioana Radu – Decolonial Knowledge Mobilization in the Classroom, San Diego, California, June 27 to July 1, 2018
- Dr. Louellyn White – Taos Healing and Reconciliation conference, Taos, New Mexico, September 13 to 17, 2018
- Purchase of Powwow Drum for Indigenous Student Drum Group, October 10, 2018
- Geneviève Sioui and Indigenous students – Canadian Roots Exchange Youth Gathering, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, November 14 to 18, 2018
- Vicky Boldo – Restorative Practices Training, London, Ontario, December 10 to 14, 2018
- First Voices Week 2019 – February 4 to 8, 2019
- Annie Lalancette – support to bring 5 Indigenous Knowledge Keepers to her class, January 2019
- Donna Kahérakwas Goodleaf, Vicky Boldo, Elizabeth Fast, Brooke Deer, Melanie Lefebvre – Think Indigenous Educational Conference, March 19 to 22, 2019

Throughout the academic year, Elders and Knowledge Keepers received honoraria as a gift for sharing their knowledge and wisdom with the university community. We were fortunate to have in our circle the following individuals: Omer St-Onge, Alexis Wawanoloath, Willard Pine, and Otsi'tsakèn:ra Charles Patton.

## **Final Chapter for IDLG - Opening Chapter for IDLC**

The Indigenous Directions Leadership Group (IDLG) is now transitioning into a new entity, the Indigenous Directions Leadership Council (IDLC). The IDLC's mandate will be to ensure that the recommendations set out in the Action Plan are implemented in their respective timeframes. Guided by a new Terms of Reference (forthcoming), this group of individuals will define the purpose and the structure of this work going forward. Indigenous Directions has a need and a desire to affect positive change at Concordia and, to this end, will seek out the university's continued collaboration.