



## INDIGENOUS DIRECTIONS

### YEAR-END REPORT

JUNE 2018

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#### INDIGENOUS DIRECTIONS LEADERSHIP GROUP – IN THE BEGINNING

In 2016, under the stewardship of Concordia University's provost and vice-president of Academic Affairs, Graham Carr, the Indigenous Directions Leadership Group (IDLG) was established. It received a three-year mandate to explore, identify and recommend priority areas in which the University can improve its responsiveness to the Truth and Reconciliation's Principles for Reconciliation and Calls to Action. The group was tasked with providing input and recommendations on the creation of both administrative and governance frameworks that will support these efforts as Concordia goes forward. With the aim of fulfilling this mandate, the group is nearing the final stages of publishing recommendations in the following areas:

- Structure for community participation; including in the decision-making processes and governance structure
- Recruitment, admission, retention, and graduation of Indigenous learners
- Recruitment and retention of Indigenous faculty and staff
- Integration of Indigenous knowledge into existing courses and programs at Concordia
- Enhancement of the cultural climate at Concordia for Indigenous learners, staff and faculty
- Research

The IDLG has been diligently carrying out its mandate and aims to have a final report ready for public distribution in the fall of 2018. Ossie Michelin, a freelance journalist who focuses on Indigenous issues, was hired to conduct interviews and draft a narrative piece that complements the recommendations. IDLG member, Charmaine Lyn, has been writing other elements of the report and editing the whole. The Action Plan Report, along with the Action Plan Tables, will be the final result of many months of assiduous work. The mandate opens up a world of challenges and opportunities.

Below is the composition of the IDLG membership (in alphabetical order) followed by the dates on which the group met during the academic year.

## **ACTIVE MEMBERS (15)**

Ron Abraira, Vicky Boldo, Orenda Boucher-Curotte, Chad Cowie, Brooke Wahsontiiostha Deer, Marie-Ève Drouin-Gagné, Donna Kahérakwas Goodleaf, Karl Hele, Heather Igloliorte, Jason Lewis, Charmaine Lyn, Charlie O'Connor, Geneviève Sioui, Cherry Smiley, Wahéhshon Shiann Whitebean

**MEETING DATES IN 2017** – May 3, May 24, June 28 (retreat), July 4, September 21, October 19, November 16, and December 7

**MEETING DATES IN 2018** - February 15, March 15, April 25, May 24

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

The following is a list of the major events and activities that members of the Indigenous Directions Leadership Group participated in during the academic year:

- One-day working retreat for IDLG (June 2017)
- Building Social Infrastructure Retreat, Wasan Island (July 2017)
- Building Respectful Relationships with Indigenous Peoples – three-day training for Concordia faculty and graduate students, presented by Alannah Young Leon and Denise Nadeau (August 2017)
- Two-day Leadership Journey to Kahnawake: Relationship-building with Concordia's Senior Academic Leadership (August 2017)
- On-line publication of monthly newsletter (October 2017 to present)
- Travelling Against the Current Panel Series – (Part 1: October 2017; Part 2: January 2018; Part 3: March 2018)
- StartUP Nations (November 2017) - Roughly forty Indigenous youth from across the province gathered at Concordia University for a three day youth collective entrepreneurship conference that highlighted the importance of developing the social economy in First Nations communities.
- First Voices and the Future of Concordia: Sharing Circle at First Voices Week (January 2018)
- On-line publication of Territorial Acknowledgement pronunciation guide (February 2018)
- Action Plan Validation and Approval Process: two events with Indigenous staff, students, and faculty at Concordia (April 2018)

## **GRATITUDE**

The Indigenous Directions Leadership Group is grateful to the Concordians who have assisted and/or participated in the hosting of the events mentioned above. Several people come to mind – members of Advancement and External Relations, the Aboriginal Student Resource Center, the Concordia Student Union, the Office of Community Engagement, to name but a few.

A special note of appreciation goes out to the following individuals who joined the Indigenous Directions family in the past year (month/year they started is indicated in brackets):

- Charlie O'Connor, Project Coordinator - replacing Tiffany Ashoona on mat leave (May 2017)
- Orenda Boucher-Curotte, Aboriginal Student Resource Centre Coordinator (August 2017)
- Linda Teoli, Administrative Support (October 2017)
- Ossie Michelin, Writer (November 2017)
- Chad Cowie, Indigenous Student Recruitment Officer (December 2017)
- Geneviève Sioui, Indigenous Community Engagement Coordinator (January 2018)
- Donna Kahérakwas Goodleaf, Indigenous Curriculum and Pedagogy Advisor (February 2018)
- Victoria Cooke, Part-time Web/Communications Support (February 2018)

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Through the Indigenous Directions Fund, the IDLG provides 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 examples of the projects that were eligible for and received IDLG funding during the academic year:

- Kahnawake Phone Directory Ad – providing contact information for Concordia Indigenous faculty and students (August 2017)
- Tillutarniit – expenses arising from Concordia-based Inuit film festival (August 2017)
- Gathering of Elders, Edmonton, AB – supporting participation of Concordia Elder, Vicky Boldo (September 2017)
- StartUP Nations – supporting participation of keynote speaker, Cliff Atleo (November 2017)
- Tsi Teiutenonhátie tsi Nikanonhio'ten (The Changing Styles) – support for models participating in this satirical Fashion Show (November 2017)
- First Voices and the Future of Concordia: Sharing Circle – providing space for event (January 2018)
- ASRC's Welcome Back Feast – sponsorship (January 2018)
- First Voices Week 2018 – providing support for Opening Ceremony (January & February 2018)
- Dr. Christine Jamieson – support for this professor to allow her to pursue a Certificate in Indigegogy at Wilfrid Laurier University (February 2018)
- Dr. Jeannine Carrière – support for this guest lecturer, a practitioner in Aboriginal child and family services, who spoke to students about her research (February 2018)
- Think Indigenous Education Conference, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (March 2018) – support for Concordia Elder Vicky Boldo who presented at the Conference

## THE NEXT CHAPTER

Since its inception only a short time ago, the IDLG has forged ahead towards finalizing the Action Plan; the task, however, is formidable. Consultations with Indigenous staff and students have resulted in a host of recommendations which have been integrated into the draft Action Plan Report and Tables. Senior-level leadership will soon be asked for their feedback on elements of the Action Plan in which their specific area is involved; it is hoped that they will report back on what they see as being realistic, what meets with their approval, and what needs to be changed in the document.

The next months will be very exciting as we near the finish line. To help us in our quest, a new position, Senior Director, Indigenous Directions, has been created and we hope to have this person in place in the next few months to help us reach our common goal – the dissemination of an Action Plan that will 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.

As Charlie so aptly put it in his interview with Ossie Michelin, "The Action Plan aims to improve education for Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners, and create a better environment for Indigenous staff, students and faculty. Other objectives are to build and maintain relationships with Indigenous communities, and create an atmosphere at Concordia that is welcoming and supportive of Indigenous cultures and worldviews." Well said, Charlie. There is still much to do before we write the final chapter...and the clock is ticking.

Prepared by Linda Teoli, Administrative Support, with the assistance of Charlie O'Connor, Project Coordinator for Indigenous Directions.