Acknowledgements

The SFU Reconciliation Workshop was convened by Simon Fraser University’s Centre for Dialogue and Office for Aboriginal Peoples in partnership with Reconciliation Canada. The event took place as part of the programming associated with the 2014 Jack P. Blaney Award for Dialogue, featuring recipient Chief Robert Joseph.

This dialogue event was made possible through funding from the Government of Canada and Province of British Columbia.


Chief Joseph is a Hereditary Chief of the Gwawaenuk First Nation, Ambassador for Reconciliation Canada, and Special Advisor to Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, among other distinctions.

As Co-Chair of British Columbia’s September 2013 national Truth and Reconciliation event and Ambassador for Reconciliation Canada, Chief Joseph led a historic effort to unite Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Events included a 70,000-person Walk for Reconciliation that brought Canada’s many cultures to walk a path together in a shared commitment to reconciliation.

About Simon Fraser University’s Centre for Dialogue

Simon Fraser University’s Centre for Dialogue uses dialogue to generate non-partisan and constructive communication around difficult topics. We partner with government, business, and community groups to explore critical issues that impact the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of our communities.

About the Jack P. Blaney Award for Dialogue

The Jack P. Blaney Award for Dialogue is presented to an individual who has demonstrated, internationally, excellence in the use of dialogue to further the understanding of complex and profound public issues. Far more than a simple ceremony, the Blaney award supports SFU’s mandate to be Canada’s most community-engaged research university through the delivery of programming designed to achieve meaningful community impact and tangible outcomes. Past award recipients include Charter for Compassion founder Karen Armstrong, MacArthur “Genius” choreographer Liz Lerman, former United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights Mary Robinson and environmentalist Maurice Strong.
**Purpose**

This report provides a record of the SFU Reconciliation Workshop, held on February 6 and 7, 2014. Included are an overview of the event’s background and design, and a summary of key themes that emerged through participant discussions.

The information in this publication is intended to reflect, as accurately as possible, the ideas expressed by the dialogue participants. This information does not necessarily reflect the opinions of Simon Fraser University’s Centre for Dialogue, its partners or advisors. This publication is published in the Creative Commons (CC BY-ND). It may be reproduced and distributed so long as its contents are not modified and credit is attributed to Simon Fraser University’s Centre for Dialogue. Any works referring to this material should cite:


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Background

The SFU Reconciliation Workshop was a day-and-a-half event taking place February 6 and 7, 2014. The goal of the workshop was to create space for the campus community to discuss the concept of reconciliation among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. A major output was a list of actionable ideas for SFU as an institution to build upon its commitment to “honour the history, culture, and presence of Aboriginal peoples.”

The workshop followed a series of activities by SFU related to residential schools and reconciliation. These include hosting an information week on campus, granting academic amnesty to students attending the September 2013 Truth and Reconciliation National Event in Vancouver, as well as associated Reconciliation Canada activities, hosting an SFU Day for Reconciliation, and registering a 300-strong team for Reconciliation Canada’s September 22 Walk for Reconciliation.

Event Planning and Design

SFU is the first post-secondary institution to stage a Reconciliation Workshop with Reconciliation Canada, and the Centre for Dialogue highly recommends that other post-secondary institutions contact Reconciliation Canada about holding similar events. We caution, however, against hosting Reconciliation Workshops in absence of such a partnership, as such events require significant expertise in the concept of reconciliation and experience working with residential school survivors to avoid re-traumatisation.

Consultation

Workshop planning began by forming an advisory group to inform the workshop design and objectives. Members of the advisory committee included:

- William Lindsay, SFU Office of Aboriginal Peoples
- Eldon Yellowhorn, SFU Department of First Nations Studies
- Jenna LaFrance, SFU Indigenous Student Centre
- Ron Johnston, SFU Office of Indigenous Education
- Brenda Morrison, SFU Centre for Restorative Justice
- Karen Joseph, Reconciliation Canada

The committee provided background information about SFU’s challenges and successes in supporting reconciliation, identified key organizations on campus to contact about the event, and provided guidance on appropriate cultural protocols.

Outreach and Invitations

Targeted outreach was a major factor in the success of the SFU Reconciliation Workshop. The goal of the workshop was for half of all participants to be Aboriginal, and the organizers worked through the event Advisory Committee to extend invitations through the university’s Aboriginal networks. Specific efforts were made to invite undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty members and administrators from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal backgrounds.
To increase the likelihood that the university would consider and act upon participant ideas, the Centre for Dialogue was invited by SFU’s Office for Aboriginal Peoples to present information about the event and extend invitations to SFU’s Aboriginal Steering Committee. Organizers also personally extended invitations to senior university administrators and representatives from key departments. These invitations included requests for participants to report the results of the Reconciliation Workshop back to their home departments.

Participant Demographics

In total, 55 members of the SFU community from at least 28 different units and departments participated in the workshop. Of the 25 participants who elected to answer questions about ancestry during registration, 54% indicated an Aboriginal background. Participants were optionally asked to indicate their role(s) at SFU, with the breakdown as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th># Attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty members</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff member</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate student</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate student</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community advisor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Event Design

The workshop began with a traditional welcome and Uts’am (Witnessing Ceremony) from Rudy Reimer of the Squamish Nation. This formal opening helped to establish a sacred tone to the proceedings that followed. This was followed by self-introductions by all participants, a presentation about the impacts of residential schools and personal storytelling from Chief Robert Joseph, a residential school survivor and Ambassador for Reconciliation Canada.

Participants spent the majority of the event in small group discussion circles led by volunteer facilitators. These breakout discussions followed traditional speaking rules where participants took a turn to speak around the circle and were encouraged to build upon each other’s ideas rather than debate points.

After learning about each other’s personal histories and exploring ideas about the meaning of reconciliation, participants brainstormed ideas for personal and institutional actions that could support reconciliation within the SFU community. Each participant was then asked to write his or her favourite idea for personal and institutional action on an index card that was collected by event organizers. Participants at each circle then collectively chose their single favourite idea for personal and institutional action to present back to the larger group.
Ideas for Institutional Action at SFU

This section summarizes participant ideas for institutional action at SFU. These ideas fall within six major themes:

1. Increasing the prominence of Aboriginal knowledge and culture across the campus community.
2. Including Aboriginal voices in decision-making and evaluation.
3. Increasing opportunities and requirements to learn about Aboriginal peoples.
4. Providing additional Aboriginal student support.
5. Promoting Aboriginal peoples teaching Aboriginal knowledge.
6. Integrating Aboriginal culture, knowledge and history broadly into SFU courses.

The full list of participant ideas within each theme is provided below. Bold letters indicate an idea that was nominated as a favourite by one or more discussion circles. Numbers in parentheses indicate how many times similar ideas were raised by participants.

Increasing the prominence of Aboriginal knowledge and culture across the campus community (23 total participant suggestions)

- Hold arts-based events to increase cultural awareness, such as storytelling, poetry, music, dance, films and other media (x 6).
- Include discussions about traditional territories and reconciliation during 1st year orientation events (x 2).
- Create more resources about Aboriginal peoples and promote their existence / make them more readily available.
- Acknowledge traditional/unceded territories at the start of meetings and explain what this means (x 4).
- Include signage that is written in Coast Salish languages (e.g. Squamish) and/or acknowledges traditional territories (x 3).
- Hire more Aboriginal staff (x 2).
- Create a truly Aboriginal place on campus (x 2).
- Create a document about language and pronunciation.
- Install physical memorials/displays/presence about past injustices.
- Hold an annual Powwow.

Including Aboriginal voices in decision-making and evaluation (16 total participant suggestions)

- Provide additional opportunities for deep sharing, dialogue, restorative justice and Truth and Reconciliation (x 6).
- Create an Aboriginal program development committee involving staff, faculty, sessional instructors and students from First Nations Studies.
- Create further relationships with Aboriginal communities and elders and consult with these groups for decision-making (x 3).
- Prioritize and operationalize SFU’s strategic plan (x 2).
- Create a task force or sub-committees to represent Aboriginal peoples and issues, and to implement specific reconciliation actions (x 2).
- Begin a consultation 'engagement' process to determine the university's role in reconciliation.
- Designate an Aboriginal representative to investigate human rights violations.

**Increasing opportunities and requirements to learn about Aboriginal peoples**

(15 total participant suggestions)

- Hold workshops about Aboriginal issues and culture for staff and faculty where participants have a safe space to ask questions and receive support. Some participants felt this should be mandatory (x 5).
- Make at least one First Nations Studies class mandatory for all students, including graduate students (x 3).
- Create a manual to help staff understand Aboriginal issues and culture (x 2).
- Create an Aboriginal library.
- Develop a class to learn an Aboriginal language and/or a class about Aboriginal languages.
- Have every department create a list of pre-authorized First Nations Studies courses that can count towards degree requirements, thereby reducing barriers for graduate and undergraduate students wanting to take these courses.
- Provide a full course on residential schools.

**Providing additional Aboriginal student support**

(11 total participant suggestions)

- Increase marketing of already existing Aboriginal student services (x 3).
- Extend an Aboriginal presence to Vancouver and Surrey campuses, such as student support, an elders program, an Aboriginal liaison, etc. (x 2).
- Create a safe space where Aboriginal classmates/colleagues can be heard if they choose to speak but where they are not expected to be 'experts' (x 2).
- Proactively attract and retain Aboriginal graduate students.
- Provide more counsellors for Aboriginal students and extend hours of operation.
- Provide training and resources to set teaching norms so that Aboriginal students and allies experience fewer uncomfortable classroom experiences.
- Raise the priority of the Aboriginal student experience.
- Provide mentorship opportunities.

**Promoting Aboriginal peoples teaching Aboriginal knowledge**

(10 total participant suggestions)

- Invite Aboriginal guests and elders to give presentations in the classroom (x 6).
- Hire additional Aboriginal faculty members (x 2).
- Include Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom (x 2).
**Integrating Aboriginal culture, knowledge and history broadly into all SFU courses**

*(5 total participant suggestions)*

- Provide meaningful administrative support for a campus-wide Aboriginal curriculum day, where Aboriginal content is promoted and presented in all classes *(x 3).*
- Expand the existing SFU library Reconciliation resource guide to include material targeted for individual courses.
- Pursue curriculum reform that integrates the concept and practice of reconciliation.

**Conclusion and Next Steps**

The ideas generated at the SFU Reconciliation Workshop cover a wide range of potential activities. Some could be implemented with relatively little cost and lead time, while others would require more substantial investments or long-term commitment. What is clear from the degree of interest and participation at the workshop is that there is significant desire across the university to support reconciliation among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, and that post-secondary institutions have a key role to play in this process.

It is the hope of the event organizers that participants at the workshop will act as ambassadors for these ideas and use this report as a tool for presenting them back to their home departments and administrative units. We also hope that SFU’s senior administration will review these ideas, use them to inform future actions, and communicate these actions back to the SFU community so that the contributions of participants are affirmed. Many participants expressed interest in further opportunities to inform and support reconciliation activities at SFU, and, where possible, this energy should be harnessed.