

# WALK

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THIS PATH

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# WITH US



REPORT OF THE SFU ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION COUNCIL  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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REPORT OF THE  
SFU ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION COUNCIL

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Simon Fraser University's Aboriginal Reconciliation Council (SFU-ARC) acknowledges the Squamish, Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, Katzie, and Kwikwetlem peoples, on whose traditional territories Simon Fraser's three campuses stand.



# INTRODUCTION

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*ARC was mandated with creating recommendations for the allocation of the Aboriginal Strategic Initiative (ASI) funds in order to advance reconciliation across the University. From the outset, ARC members determined that ASI funds must create and sustain real change on campus, so that Indigenous ways are fully infused into every aspect of SFU's operations. Indigenization cannot be a glossy or superficial overlay; it must be transformative for every person who works or studies at SFU. The enduring legacy of ARC will be a change in our university culture, in the way we think, act, and interact with each other and with the Aboriginal communities on whose traditional and unceded territories Simon Fraser University is built.*

Reconciliation is the establishment of respectful relations between two groups, and as such, is a responsibility that is shared by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike. ARC represents an opportunity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of SFU to co-create a preferred future in which SFU is known as a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment for Indigenous students, staff, and faculty. The ARC process was itself transformative for the university, demonstrating a principled, inclusive, and respectful approach to consultation, dialogue, and change. ARC's open forums, at which the university community came together to discuss and address Indigenous issues, represent SFU's first steps toward reconciliation and may serve as a model for individual units in their pursuit of Indigenization.



# VISION

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## *SFU: Where Indigenous Peoples Flourish*

### **Jesse's First Day**

It is the first day of classes for the Fall 2022 Semester at SFU. Jesse, a first-year student, gets off the bus at the Cornerstone bus loop and makes her way through the campus. As she walks past a welcome pole, she notices an Indigenous gathering place in the heart of campus. The sign outside the gathering place welcomes her in the language of her ancestors, and she sees similar greetings in several other First Nations Languages. As she passes the gathering place, she can hear drumming – they are holding a traditional welcome ceremony for everyone coming to the campus that day. People of every origin have gathered to take part, and leaving their personal baggage on the nail at the entrance, have come to engage in respectful dialogue, to calm their spirits and to receive the blessings of the elder's welcome. Amidst the throngs of people, Jesse recognizes several other students from her band.





When the ceremony is finished, Jesse heads for her first class. Building names and signs, in English and in several First Nations languages, help her to find her way. She feels comfortable along this path; the art and traditional symbols remind her of her home, and she feels proud to be standing on the traditional and unceded territory of her ancestors. Here, she senses that her past can be an important part of her future.

Jesse's cousin has told her that there is also a wonderful place to meet other Indigenous students; at lunch she stops by the Indigenous Student Centre where she finds a quiet place to study. Her sense of comfort and belonging is growing, and she is excited to get to her next class: An Introduction to Coast Salish Languages. She hopes to be one of the first in her band to graduate with a major in Business and a minor in Salish Languages. Jesse has dreams – big dreams – and the confidence that she has the strength, skills, and support to reach them. It is a good day.

The story of Jesse's first day is, at the time of this writing, a work of fiction, partly because it is set in the future, and partly because the conditions for Jesse's first day do not currently exist. In 2009, the *Association of Canadian Deans of Education* released the Accord on Indigenous Education, with the vision that, "Indigenous identities, cultures, languages, values, ways of knowing, and knowledge systems will flourish in all Canadian learning settings." The SFU Aboriginal Reconciliation Council shares that simple yet compelling vision: that SFU is a place where Indigenous Peoples flourish. At SFU, Indigenous identities are recognized and celebrated. At SFU, Indigenous culture is an essential part of the fabric of the University. At SFU, students can learn about and in Indigenous languages. At SFU, Indigenous values are respected. At SFU, Indigenous ways of knowing and knowledge systems find their place in the research agendas and academic programming of the University. At SFU, we co-create pathways to success for Indigenous students, through close connections to our communities and through effective programs and supports.

The path to Jesse's first day will not be an easy one. Realizing the ARC vision will not be accomplished through one-time funding, nor will it be the result of the work of a committee, no matter how dedicated they are. It will be the result of taking bold actions in the short term, actions that will build a base for systemic and cultural change in the long term. It is a path we must walk together.



# PRINCIPLES

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*Stemming from discussions with local Indigenous communities, organizations such as the Métis Nation BC, and current SFU students, ARC developed a set of five principles designed to guide the allocation of ASI funds. The five principles, in turn, govern the Calls to Action which address the specific priority areas. The Calls to Action, and indeed the entire ARC process, focused on the student experience at all stages from secondary school to alumni transitions, so that every Indigenous student attending SFU will reach their full potential, intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically.*

In determining how to focus the ASI funds, ARC recommends that SFU use the funds to enable new projects, or to accelerate priority projects. ARC strongly prefers projects that have the potential to become sustainable after three years, and/or that leverage other funding sources and opportunities. In select cases, ASI funds might be used to transition existing programs or projects to permanent status.

## **PRINCIPLE 1 Nothing about us without us.**

Aboriginal voice is an essential component of all ARC projects and recommendations. One of the strongest messages to emerge from the campus and community consultations was that for far too long, educational decisions have been made about Aboriginal peoples, not with Aboriginal peoples. True and sustained reconciliation will necessitate participation by Aboriginal peoples in all decisions about Aboriginal peoples at SFU.

**PRINCIPLE 2** Priority should be placed on projects or actions that will have a direct benefit for current and future FNMI students, staff and faculty, and for the indigenization of the whole university.

SFU has had a history of positive actions in support of Aboriginal peoples, including transition and bridging programs; financial, spiritual, and social programs for those students currently enrolled at SFU; and supports for students transitioning out of the university. As SFU journeys toward reconciliation, it must put the needs of Aboriginal people—current and future—first.

**PRINCIPLE 3** ASI funds will not be used to pay for projects or activities that are currently being funded from discretionary, carry-forward, or “soft” funds.

SFU needs to establish core funding for programs or services that are currently funded using “soft” or discretionary funds. Aboriginal Strategic Initiative funds are not to be used to replace funds that had been targeted or identified for Aboriginal purposes in prior plans or budgets. In select cases, ASI funds may be used to transition programs to permanent, sustainable funding sources.

**PRINCIPLE 4** Where possible, ASI funds will be leveraged to maximize funding.

ASI funds offer a tremendous opportunity to be generative, and ARC therefore encourages participants in ASI projects to have a financial and operational stake in those projects. Matching programs, demonstrations of financial contributions, or intentions to use fund-raising campaigns are strongly encouraged.

**PRINCIPLE 5** ASI funds have as a primary intention the support of projects or initiatives that will have a “legacy” effect.

ASI funds may not be expended to meet short-term or one-time needs, so that the opportunity for creating sustained change will not be lost. A condition for ASI funding must include an indication of how the funds will be used to create meaningful, sustained change that supports reconciliation.

# CALLS TO ACTION

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*Within each cluster are calls to action that are priorities for ASI funding, while others will require non-financial commitments and/or alternative funding sources. Those calls to action that are targeted for ASI funding are labelled “ASI Priority.” Other calls to action are recommended for seed funding or transitional funding.*

The broad categories of feedback that shaped the direction of the Calls to Action are:

1. Safe and welcoming Indigenous spaces;
2. Curriculum innovation and Indigenization;
3. Student pathways and supports; and
4. Administration, hiring, and project implementation.

## **CLUSTER 1 | SAFE AND WELCOMING INDIGENOUS SPACES**

1. (ASI Priority) Host University-wide events, such as reconciliation dialogues, to build understanding and support within the University community, beginning in Year 1.
2. (ASI Priority) Establish an Indigenous Cultural Resource Centre at SFU, and consult with the Centre in the creation or alteration of all Indigenous spaces.
3. (Consider for seed funding from ASI) Reinvigorate long-delayed plans for creating a culturally appropriate ceremonial hall, which would comprise Phase 1 of an eventual Coast Salish longhouse.
4. (ASI Priority) Remove colonial art that is degrading to the Indigenous population.
5. (ASI Priority) Install Aboriginal signage, place names, translations of building names, and path indicators at all three campuses.
6. (Consider for transition funding from ASI) Enhance Indigenous cultural safety, including the appointment of an Indigenous ombudsperson.
7. (ASI Priority) Develop mandatory intervention programs teaching cultural safety and anti-racism for all employees of SFU, in consultation with the Indigenous Cultural Resource Centre.
10. (ASI Priority) Consult with the Indigenous Cultural Resource Centre on the installation of Indigenous art and commissioned artifacts.
11. (ASI Priority) Use ASI funds to pilot the development and installation of safe spaces at Burnaby, and employ other funding opportunities in subsequent years to create dedicated space at the other campuses.
13. (ASI Priority) Using ASI funds and in consultation with the Indigenous Cultural Resource Centre, develop mandatory intervention programs teaching cultural safety and anti-racism to all employees of SFU.

## **CLUSTER 2 | INNOVATION AND INDIGENIZATION IN CURRICULUM AND RESEARCH**

- 12: The Office of the Vice-President, Academic and Provost should initiate a process to determine the best option for Indigenizing curriculum at SFU, and for ensuring that all students at SFU have these curricular experiences early in their programs. (Year 1 priority).
14. (ASI Priority) Fund the creation and implementation of community language programs and on-campus courses, including a degree program option, for Indigenous languages.
18. (ASI Priority) Provide targeted funds to build SFU's capacity to support faculty who wish to Indigenize their courses.

21. (ASI Priority) Establish an Indigenous Curriculum Resource Centre (ICRC).
22. (ASI Priority) Establish an Indigenous Curriculum Review Committee to review and make recommendations for the approval of Indigenous curriculum, beginning in Year 1.
34. Convene an Indigenous Research Committee to establish respectful and ethical protocols and practices for researching in and with Indigenous communities; and to ensure that Indigenous perspectives, knowledge systems, and ways of knowing are respected and supported in the scholarship of faculty and students.

## **CLUSTER 3 | STUDENT PATHWAYS AND SUPPORTS**

8. (ASI Priority) Expand the Indigenous Student Centre on Burnaby Campus.
9. Identify permanent and sustainable core funding for all Indigenous student support programming.
15. Proceed with the external review and the re-visioning process, and then identify permanent and sustainable core funding for the AOTP.
17. (Consider for seed funding from ASI) The Office of the Vice President, Academic and Provost should examine the feasibility of developing a bridge program for PhD students, with a decision to be made in Year 1.

## **CLUSTER 4 | ADMINISTRATION, HIRING, AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

16. Continue the Faculty Bridge Program along the current model, with three years of support from the Office of the Vice President, Academic and Provost, followed by an assumption of financial responsibility at the faculty level after the third year. The goal is for each academic unit to have at least one Indigenous scholar by 2020.
19. (Consider for seed funding from ASI) Pursue federal, provincial, and donor sources to create the SFU Institute for Indigenous Dialogue, Governance, and Empowerment. The size of the ask should be sufficiently bold to enable the Institute to immediately effect change in Indigenous governance and empowerment; an initial estimate of \$20 million would provide both start-up funds and ensure sustainability of the enterprise.
20. Develop ways in which Aboriginal participation and decision-making may be increased in all levels of the University, including students, staff, faculty, and senior administrative and leadership levels.
23. (ASI Priority) Expand the information and education campaign around Indigenous protocols and cultural practices, so that units have a range of resources to draw upon in planning events and ceremonies.
24. Develop a repatriation framework that establishes SFU's proactive stance on repatriation, and engage with Indigenous communities and the province, which originally mandated SFU as a repository for human remains.

25. (ASI Priority) In consultation with the Indigenous Cultural Resource Centre, establish culturally appropriate guidelines and policies to facilitate the purchase of ceremonial materials.
26. (ASI Priority) In consultation with the Indigenous Cultural Resource Centre, establish fair, standardized compensation for Aboriginal knowledge holders, and establish appropriate guidelines and protocols for compensating them for their work.
27. (ASI Priority) In consultation with the Indigenous Cultural Resource Centre, establish respectful and culturally appropriate protocols for ensuring that knowledge holders are paid in a timely and respectful fashion, while working within University guidelines for accountability.
28. (ASI Priority) Task the Indigenous Cultural Resource Centre with disseminating knowledge to individuals and groups who wish to co-create a ceremony or event based on Indigenous practices.
29. Develop a policy on Indigenous self-identification, a campaign to encourage self-identification, and a mechanism to allow this to happen.
30. (ASI Priority) Develop Indigenous student safety policies for Indigenous student gathering spaces on all three campuses.
31. (ASI Priority) Create leadership and coordination roles for the implementation and reporting on the calls to action over a three-year period. This could entail new hires or secondments, and must begin in Year 1.
32. (Consider for seed funding from ASI) Ensure that newly established or re-established relationships with local Aboriginal communities and groups are nurtured and supported through the appointment of a Community Liaison Officer. This could entail a new hire or a secondment and must begin in Year 1
33. Create an Indigenous Centre for Dialogue (ICD) to be housed in the Institute for Indigenous Dialogue, Governance, and Empowerment.









