

Dalhousie University Indigenous Strategy

December 2018

Our Ideal

Dalhousie University is a place of discovery and learning that welcomes and nurtures knowledge seekers in all our cultural diversity. In particular, Indigenous learners and scholars feel at home in surroundings infused with the sense of place on traditional Mi'kmaq land. We all feel fully supported in our spiritual and intellectual growth as we strive for excellence in a personal approach to our chosen disciplines and professions. Dalhousie is a centre of excellence in the study of Mi'kmaq culture, language, history and philosophy in partnership with Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous knowledge keepers and regional organizations.

Vision

That Dalhousie's partnerships and relationships with Indigenous communities in Mi'kma'ki will be recognized as models of respectful, impactful engagement, built upon the principles of *etuaptmumk* (two-eyed seeing), impacting all aspects of teaching, research and service.

Committee membership

Patti Doyle-Bedwell, Potlotek First Nation, Co-Chair Indigenous Advisory Council, Committee Co-Chair
Keith Taylor, Committee Co-Chair
Brad Wuetherick, Co-Chair Indigenous Advisory Council
Sara Daniels, Member, Indigenous Advisory Council
Art Stevens, Millbrook First Nation, Member, Indigenous Advisory Council
Quenta Adams, Student Affairs
Anne Forrestall, Student Affairs
Fiona Black, Provost's Office
Leanne French Munn (Planning Office and Project Advisor)
Courtney Sutton (Provost's Office and Project Manager)

The Committee received much helpful guidance from additional members of the Indigenous Advisory Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Indigenous Strategy Committee was mandated by the Provost and established in March 2017 under the aegis of the steering committee for Strategic Priority 5.2 on Diversity and Inclusion. This action endorsed requests and guidance from Dalhousie's Indigenous Advisory Council. The Strategy Committee includes members from that important Council.

The Committee recognizes that Indigenous peoples are not an "equity-seeking group" like any other. Indigenous peoples have constitutional rights and privileges, which Dalhousie acknowledges and wishes to act upon.

Consultations with internal and external communities, complemented by expert guidance from two senior Indigenous External Advisors Dr Marie Battiste and Dr Michael DeGagné, informed and influenced the Committee's discussions and our recommendations. The Committee defines 'consultations' as respectful and substantive engagement, putting into practice the intent behind the phrase 'nothing about us without us.' The establishment and perpetual practice of partnership and relationship building will be fundamental to the success of any of the recommendations.

The Committee's work was informed by the framework presented in Daryl G. Smith's *Diversity's Promise for Higher Education: Making it Work* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015). The recommendations are grouped within five sections, based on the pillars suggested by Smith's framework: institutional viability and vitality; access and success; climate and intergroup relations; education; and, research and scholarship.

The Committee, and its key informants, warmly acknowledge that the Transition Year Program, operated out of the College of Continuing Education, and the Indigenous Black & Mi'kmaq Initiative, Schulich School of Law, have been addressing aspects of inequities faced by Indigenous peoples of the region for several decades. In more recent years, the Aboriginal Health Sciences Initiative and programs based in some Faculties aimed to address other aspects of these inequities. The Committee was informed by experiences with and reviews of those programs, as well as by several existing studies and reports listed in Appendix 4. The recommendations in this Strategy are consistent with those of previous reports and existing programs at Dalhousie.

Three short-term actions are crucial in order to enable the implementation of the recommendations. These actions will underpin the transformation of Dalhousie's relationships with Indigenous peoples in Mi'kma'ki and beyond:

Action #1: In consultation with community, Dalhousie will establish an Indigenous Advisory Board to include majority representation from communities in Mi'kma'ki. This Board will be asked to: a) Advise and guide Dal on a statement of principles that will govern the implementation of the Indigenous Strategy, including definitions of the scope of Dalhousie's interpretation of the term 'Indigenous.' The statement of principles may lead to some amendments to these recommendations. Only after receiving that guidance and any ensuing amendments should Dalhousie move forward with implementation of the recommendations. Further information on this Action is included in Recommendation #1

Action #2: Dalhousie will develop a new, continuing, position of Director of Indigenous Community Engagement, whose initial work will include helping to establish the Board itself. This position is described further in Recommendation #3b.

Action #3: Dalhousie will allocate new, continuing, funding to support a new Office of Indigenous Relations to be led by a new Senior Administrative position of Vice-Provost Indigenous Relations and to support Faculties and units in continuing and enhancing all of their work regarding relationship-building, curriculum and program development, and scholarly and creative work. Substantial budget allocations and endowments are required to achieve the recommendations within this Strategy. The Committee suggests an initial budget amount in Recommendation #1. Further, new base budget will be needed in ensuing years to launch and achieve all of the recommendations.

On an ongoing basis, the Provost, through the leadership of the Vice-Provost Indigenous Relations and the Vice-Provost Planning, will be responsible for measuring and communicating progress towards the implementation and success of the recommendations within this Strategy.

Following presentation of the draft Strategy to Senate and the Board for information and discussion, and the completion of final edits based on feedback from those governing bodies, the Strategy is presented to the Provost for action, and to the steering committee for Priority 5.2 on Diversity and Inclusion to conclude that committee's oversight for the generation of this Strategy.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action, Dalhousie has been increasingly committed to strengthening relationships with Indigenous peoples, and to serving their postsecondary needs and interests in a respectful, collaborative manner. This Strategy embraces the intent of the Calls to Action within a broader mandate that addresses all major functions at Dalhousie.

This is a long journey. Considerable activity is already underway, notably some of the responses by Faculties and units to specific TRC Calls to Action. Reconciliation, writ large, requires fundamental shifts in goals, structures, policies and behaviours. As External Advisor, Dr Marie Battiste, reminded us, "A basic fact to keep in mind is that Section 35 of the Canadian constitution and Section 27 establish Mi'kmaw as a constitutional entity. Aboriginal Treaty Rights are a post-secondary right as well" (Appendix 1).

Both Dr Battiste and External Advisor, Dr Michael DeGagné, offered commentary concerning the balance of an emphasis on Mi'kmaw land, culture and peoples and supports for all Indigenous peoples. Dr DeGagné summarized thus: "This is an area where policy needs to be developed. A specific reference to Mi'kmaq is called for in most cases given the special history and relationship with the Mi'kmaq community, but a clear openness to a broader Aboriginal agenda would make Dalhousie's efforts more consistent with the rest of the Canadian university system." Fostering an environment at Dalhousie that is welcoming to all Indigenous students, whilst foregrounding Mi'kmaq, will be important.

Whilst this Strategy does not adopt all of the specific wording within the External Advisors' reports, the Committee's further consultations (Appendix 2) have enabled us to test the waters with multiple, informed stakeholders, to capture their intent and to echo Dr DeGagné's final words, "These recommendations can be implemented starting with the development of a senior and ongoing source of advice within the institution, professional development across the university, and progress on the development of a centralized space and focus for Aboriginal services, one which provides a place for advisors, student success support, and the co-location of service, liaison, recruitment, and elder support."

The Strategy Committee's consultations included a full-day retreat with Dalhousie's Indigenous Advisory Committee, during which we heard from many members of the Committee, including Aaron Prosper (Eskasoni First Nation), current President of the Dalhousie Student Union. Guidance and specific suggestions to the Committee by IAC members is reflected in this document.

Three actions are required to launch this Strategy:

- Action #1:** In consultation with community, Dalhousie will establish an Indigenous Advisory Board (IAB) to include majority representation from communities in Mi'kma'ki. This Board will be asked to:
- Advise and guide Dalhousie on a statement of principles that will govern the implementation of the Indigenous Strategy, including definitions of the scope of Dalhousie's interpretation of the term 'Indigenous.' The statement of principles may lead to some amendments to these recommendations. Only after receiving that guidance and any ensuing amendments should Dalhousie move forward with implementation of the remaining recommendations. The principles will also inform some amendment to Dalhousie's institutional Mission and Vision statements.
 - Provide ongoing advice and counsel on the implementation of the Indigenous Strategy.
 - Liaise with and advise the Board of Governors and Senate.

Action #2: Dalhousie will develop a new, continuing, position of Director of Indigenous Community Engagement, whose initial work will include helping to establish the Indigenous Advisory Board itself.

This position is described further in Recommendation #3b. Ultimately, this position will report to the Vice-Provost Indigenous Relations.

Action #3: Dalhousie will allocate new, continuing, funding to support a new Office of Indigenous Relations to be led by a new Senior Administrative position of Vice-Provost Indigenous Relations and to support Faculties and units in continuing and enhancing all of their work regarding relationship-building, curriculum and program development, and scholarly and creative work. Substantial budget allocations and endowments are required to achieve the recommendations within this Strategy. The Committee suggests an initial budget amount in Recommendation #1.

This Strategy document does not include an implementation plan. Nevertheless, the Committee has included a suggested Table of thematic priorities and their related recommendations, with the goal of achieving demonstrable change by 2025. In addition, by 2021, an update Strategy document will, ideally, be more culturally informed. Communities must be provided with opportunities to shape the language used.

In essence, this document is a set of initial instructions for the evolution of Dalhousie.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutional Viability and Vitality

In consultation with the IAB, Dalhousie will:

1. Invest substantially, with an allocation of at least \$500,000 in the first year, in building institutional human resource capacity, structures, research and library resources to enable the successful implementation of the Indigenous Strategy as a critical institutional priority.
2. Develop a new position: Vice-Provost Indigenous Relations. This senior leadership position will be filled by an Indigenous person with proven leadership skills and wide knowledge of Mi'kma'ki, ideally a Mi'kmaq person. The VP Indigenous Relations will lead initiatives relating to increasing capacity and expertise at Dalhousie in order to ensure successful implementation of the Indigenous Strategy. The VP Indigenous Relations, reporting to the Provost and Vice-President Academic, will liaise closely with the Vice-President Research, the Vice-Provost Student Affairs, the Vice-Provost Planning and the Associate Vice-President Academic.
3. Establish an Office of Indigenous Relations, led by the Vice-Provost Indigenous Relations. The Office will establish strong and ongoing relationships with communities, organizations and associations. Appendix 3 provides a list of some of these. The Office will include, at a minimum:
 - a. Vice-Provost Indigenous Relations (designated position for an Indigenous, preferably a Mi'kmaq, person)
 - b. Director of Indigenous Community Engagement (designated position for a Mi'kmaq person)
 - c. Director of Project Management and Assessment
 - d. Executive Assistant
4. Through the Office of the Provost, establish mechanisms to ensure appropriate synergies across all of the activities, current and planned, that relate to this Strategy.
5. Through the Office of the Provost, ensure the development and publication of measurable outcomes and their planned deadlines.
6. Develop an Indigenous HR plan for both Faculty and Staff in order to increase institutional capacity across all of our campuses.
7. Through Senate policies and institutional processes, provide guidance and support for non-Indigenous colleagues regarding further competencies in teaching and research.
8. Review core institutional processes in order that Indigenous perspectives will, over time, be woven throughout constitutional/by-law documents (such as for the Board of Governors, Senate and Faculties), collective agreements, HR handbooks, strategic plans and ongoing reports and accreditation processes.
9. Develop a robust capital plan to enable the eventual construction of a centrally-located building that would honour Dalhousie's location in Mi'kma'ki and provide a space for Elders, for learning by all, for specialized student services, for ceremonies and more.

10. Build ongoing partnerships with relevant Provincial and Federal departments and agencies, including Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada to enable the building of collaborative models, through appropriate funding, across postsecondary institutions that operate within Mi'kma'ki.

Convene a meeting, chaired by Dalhousie's Provost and Vice-President Academic of senior colleagues from post-secondary institutions in the Halifax region, to discuss the feasibility of adopting the shared services recommendations within the report "Shared Services Potential across the Halifax Regional Municipality for Indigenous Student Access & Success in Post-Secondary Education (Feasibility Study, October 2018) by Kara Paul, Eskasoni First Nation, Project Associate, Student Affairs (Appendix 5).

Student Access and Success

In consultation with the IAB, Dalhousie will:

11. Build partnerships, through the Director of Indigenous Community Engagement, to provide a range of educational enrichment experiences at the elementary, junior and senior high school levels:
 - a. Partnerships must include appropriate organizations as advised by the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs. The enrichment experiences will be developed in collaboration with Mi'kmaq education leaders.
 - b. Partnerships should include other post-secondary institutions in Atlantic Canada to obtain a geographic spread ensuring broad access.
 - c. Enrichment experiences could include some or all of: summer camps, land-based learning, classroom visits, after school programs, in-service workshops for teachers, and on-line resources.
 - d. Each Faculty at Dalhousie will contribute intellectual resources as appropriate. Especially, Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students will find employment and experience as mentors and instructors.
12. Undertake periodic reviews of the recruitment and admission processes to make sure standard processes do not discourage the participation of Indigenous students:
 - a. Committees conducting such reviews must include community representatives.
 - b. Committees would be charged with reviewing current affirmative action admission policies; institutional and program recruitment strategies; and the implementation of prior learning assessment as some examples.
 - c. Institutional strategic enrollment management plans will include specific targets and supports for Indigenous students.
13. Enhance and support transition and orientation programming for new and transfer students in all types and levels of program:
 - a. Development of transition programming must be done in partnership with appropriate community organizations and will be coordinated through Student Affairs.
 - b. Transition programs can provide an opportunity for students with gaps in their education background to fill those gaps. The experiences of TYP (Transition Year Program) and the more recently established ISAP (Indigenous Student Access Pathway on the Agriculture Campus), as well as transition programs in other institutions, can guide the evolution of existing programs and the establishment of additional ones as needed.
 - c. Student Affairs and individual Faculties should conduct periodic reviews of current orientation programming to ensure Indigenous student supports are made available.

- d. Student Affairs and individual Faculties should develop key performance indicators to measure impact of their outreach efforts through their orientation and transition to Dalhousie programming.
14. Ensure that the Indigenous Student Centre is appropriately resourced by professional staff, student employees and community volunteers to support student retention and degree progression goals:
 - a. Develop and maintain culturally-appropriate programming and supports for first year students.
 - b. Facilitate meaningful connections for students to the Elders-in-Residence.
 - c. Develop, in partnership with internal and external allies, career development and career exploration programming.
 15. Establish an endowed fund to enable provision of multi-year scholarships and bursaries to undergraduate Indigenous students.
 16. Establish an endowed fund with the goal to enable 20% or more of our undergraduate Indigenous students to have the opportunity for summer research or other employment.
 17. Establish a designated fund for graduate scholarships for Indigenous students to provide incentive to departments, and individual researchers, to seek out and mentor promising Indigenous undergraduate students into graduate programs.
 18. Prioritize selected recommendations within this Strategy in order to foster improvements in the experiences of Dalhousie's current Indigenous students.

Climate and Intergroup Relations

In consultation with the IAB, Dalhousie will:

19. Clarify, for internal and external communities, recognition of the uniqueness of Indigenous peoples, their role on this land and the nation-to-nation relationship.
15. Develop a campus master plan reflective of our campuses' place in Mi'kma'ki, especially regarding the naming conventions for buildings, streets, and physical features such as gardens.
16. Define territorial acknowledgement statements used across our campuses both in public settings and by individuals.
17. Host relevant events on our campuses, both for celebration and to address reconciliation.
18. For art and artifacts on our campuses, Dalhousie's art gallery director will work in consultation with communities.
19. Provide opportunities for faculty, staff and students to engage with communities.
20. Ensure that Dalhousie's outward facing materials include appropriate representation of Indigenous faculty, staff and students, and our place in Mi'kma'ki.

21. Embed in the cyclical reviews of all university policies and procedures consideration of Indigenous ways and impact on Dalhousie faculty, staff and students, including, but not limited to, policies and procedures around accommodation, racism and bullying.
22. Develop campus-wide Indigenous cultural awareness through consultation with and learning from community members in Dalhousie and elsewhere, and educational events for all Dalhousie's academic and other leaders.

Education

In consultation with the IAB, Dalhousie will:

23. Ensure that all Dalhousie degree programs (at the undergraduate and graduate levels) be required to implement Indigenous content and knowledges into their curricula (as appropriate for the discipline).
24. Support instructors to integrate Indigenous pedagogies into the teaching and learning environment.
25. Support all Dalhousie students, regardless of degree program, in developing intercultural competence (including a specific focus on Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous cultures) as a universal graduate attribute.
26. Provide experiential learning opportunities for students at all levels to engage with communities.
27. Work with Indigenous communities (particularly within Mi'kma'ki) to develop community-based credit programming that meets the needs of both local communities and Indigenous students.
28. Further develop current Indigenous Studies programming to offer an undergraduate major, as well as developing, in the longer term, graduate programming at the master's and PhD levels.

Research and Scholarship

In consultation with the IAB, Dalhousie will:

29. Support the adoption of 'Indigenous research across the disciplines' as one of Dalhousie's emerging areas of research excellence:
 - a. Continue to grow research capacity in the areas of Indigenous health and well-being, Indigenous law and governance, and Indigenous environmental studies and policy.
 - b. Develop research capacity explicitly in the areas of Mi'kmaw language, culture and history, as well as in the area of Indigenous economic development.
30. Expand and support Indigenous research capacity:

- c. Increase the number of Indigenous tenure-stream faculty, including at the level of Canada Research Chairs.
- d. Support non-Indigenous faculty in developing the capacities to undertake Indigenous research appropriately and respectfully.
- e. Be a leader (and be seen as such) in supporting Indigenous pathways into research, particularly by growing the number of Indigenous graduate students as well as growing the opportunities for Indigenous students to experience research at the undergraduate level.

31. Partner with Indigenous communities to advance research and scholarship.

32. Transform the research environment on campus to support Indigenous research:

- a. Conduct a needs assessment for space and infrastructure required for Indigenous research.
- b. Enhance the coordination of Indigenous research on campus.
- c. Support the research community, in particular the Dalhousie Research Ethics Board, to understand Indigenous research methodologies and ethics.
- d. Implement, through training of committees and academic leaders, the new standards for recognizing and rewarding non-traditional scholarship and traditional ways of knowing in tenure and promotion, as reflected in the current Collective Agreement between the Board of Governors and the Dalhousie Faculty Association.
- e. Support the dissemination of Indigenous research into communities as a critical component of all Indigenous research.
- f. Enhance the mentorship and support for faculty engaged in Indigenous research, particularly as it pertains to supporting research funding processes.

Suggested Priorities, 2019-2021

Reconciliation is a responsibility of everyone. Meaningful change will be gradual. Dalhousie requires mechanisms that will both foster and enable change. The recommendations all contribute to three major, transformative priorities.

Priority	Comments
Partnerships and relationships with communities, Indigenous organizations, with other PSE institutions, and within Dalhousie.	<p>Dalhousie has a responsibility to be a leader for postsecondary education throughout the region. We shall have greater impact and chance of long-lasting success if we work together.</p> <p>A key component of the early work of the new Office of Indigenous Relations will be the establishment of meaningful and respectful partnerships to support: pathways into higher education; faculty/staff recruitment and hiring; experiential learning in communities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students; scholarly work that is meaningful for communities.</p>

Student engagement and success	<p>Current and future generations of Dalhousie students will make our region and country a better place, with reconciliation an assumed, ongoing, priority.</p> <p>Recognizing that all Indigenous students richly deserve support, Dalhousie should provide a comparative advantage to Indigenous students from Mi'kma'ki.</p>
Support for Indigenous Faculty and Staff	<p>Mentorship on career development is valuable for all employees, but is especially useful for those entering their profession later or with significant family responsibilities.</p> <p>Recognize that developing and maintaining relationships for community-based research, as well as disseminating conclusions to community, are time consuming and not as easily measured as other forms of scholarly work."</p>
Education and support for non-Indigenous Faculty and Staff	<p>Need to ensure clear and appropriate processes to be used on a long-term basis for orientation for all new employees, annual career development, Tenure and Promotion, leadership development, etc. New Vice Provost to be key advisor.</p> <p>All of this is to support our collective responsibility towards reconciliation, writ large, without increasing the workload for indigenous faculty members.</p>

Appendix 1

External Advisors to the Indigenous Strategy Committee Observations and Recommendations August 2017

Dr. Marie Battiste, Professor of Education, University of Saskatchewan, and Dr. Michael DeGagné, President and Vice-Chancellor of Nipissing University, visited Dalhousie University May 17-19, 2017 and met with individuals, singly or in small groups, with a role to play in issues related to the indigenization of the institution. The schedule of meetings is included with this report as an appendix. This document is a compilation of key observations and recommendations made by Drs. Battiste and DeGagné during their visit. These also include recommendations from a public presentation entitled “Indigenizing the Academy” by Dr. Battiste on May 17.

One overall observation is that the image of indigenous related initiatives at Dalhousie appears fractured. There needs to be a single front door whereby one can navigate in a clear manner all the aspects of the university’s activities. Having a special advisor to the President and one or more cultural experts on staff as well as a prominent physical location would help.

Section A

Dr Marie Battiste’s recommendations, compiled by Dr Keith Taylor and edited by Dr Battiste.

A basic fact to keep in mind is that Section 35 of the Canadian constitution and Section 27 establish Mi’kmaw as a constitutional entity. Aboriginal Treaty Rights are a post-secondary right as well. Chiefs also believe this. “Mi’kmaq peoples are a charter group that is specific. Other treaty groups are distinct. It is a matter of educating people why Mi’kmaq are ‘both and’ but not everyone is ‘both and’.”

The remaining observations are arranged among the four categories: Education and Scholarship, Institutional Viability and Vitality, Access and Success, and Climate and Intergroup Relations.

1. Education and Scholarship:

- a. Prepare a self-study tool for helping faculties and departments to consider what it means to Indigenize, taking into account local protocols, what ‘appropriate’ means in relation to deciding on content, processes, and outcomes not only for Indigenous/Mi’kmaq but all students.
- b. There need to be transition opportunities in the communities. There is not enough of Dalhousie in the communities.
- c. Build content of courses to include Indigenous knowledge - the peoples, histories, treaties, languages, values, and ways of knowing.
- d. A Mi’kmaw archives has been started. Dalhousie could possibly be a home to Mi’kmaw collections. This would provide a research and teaching resource as well as being a step towards the institutional understanding of the Mi’kmaw heritage.
- e. Consider developing a land-based graduate education run in collaboration with communities.
- f. There is an opportunity for Dalhousie to build programs and community relations as funding issues at Cape Breton University hamper their programs.
- g. Brent Young, of the Dalhousie Indigenous Students’ Collective, reports a huge will among students to learn about indigenous issues and how to interact with indigenous peoples.

2. Institutional Viability and Vitality:

- a. Reconceive the house. Most universities include an indigenous pillar in their strategic plan; but rarely as the theme in the Mission Statement. Develop a foundational document.

- b. Invest in Indigenous hires in all areas and at all levels, not just in Indigenous niches. Set targets and actively recruit. Also train your own.
- c. Identify issues of inequality, racism and oppression, and remove barriers from Indigenous faculty in their career progress.
- d. Many indigenous faculty members, as a result of their teaching responsibilities, nature of their research, or administrative duties, are obliged to develop and maintain strong relationships with communities external to Dalhousie University. Building trusting relationships in external indigenous communities may be an essential component of a research program or may be key to providing viable access to our educational programs. This is a time-consuming process and is not easily accounted for in the usual 40-40-20 guidelines for division of effort among teaching, research and service responsibilities. A template for Letters of Appointment should be designed to assist deans in formulating letters that properly reflect the agreement among the department, Dean and candidate on workload when there is an expectation of substantial relationship building in external communities.
- e. There would be great value in the establishment of a centrally located building dedicated to the Mi'kmaw culture and housing the indigenous student advisor, study and tutoring space, and an appropriate space for ceremonial activities. Such a building would also provide the opportunity to display maps, artifacts and treaty contents that would help the entire community recognize the unique relationship of the university with the Mi'kmaw people.
- f. Efforts should be made to develop the Mi'kmaq components of the sense of place that is Dalhousie. Select Mi'kmaw names for lanes, rooms or even buildings. Academic prizes and appropriate regalia can also contribute to this sense of place.

3. Access and Success:

- a. Kara Paul was a valuable connection to the communities through her activities with the Aboriginal Health Sciences Initiative (AHSI). As broader pathways for Mi'kmaw students are developed, strong and enduring community connections are vital.
- b. Look into developing a component of *community connection* for select initiatives to target and support Mi'kmaw applicants.
- c. Build programs in communities.
- d. Should seek special Pathways funding. Agriculture campus has some advantages because of location.
- e. Mi'kmaw students need to feel like they belong. Events could be added to orientation. A welcoming safe space would be amazing to have.
- f. The law school's admissions policy needs to be looked at in more detail to systematically increase access of Indigenous applicants.

4. Climate and Intergroup Relations:

- a. Indigenous versus Mi'kmaq: It is critical to recognize and acknowledge that the Mi'kmaq people, by virtue of Dalhousie's location in Mi'kmaw traditional territory, should have a relationship with Dalhousie that is distinct from that of other indigenous peoples and from other disadvantaged communities.
- b. Promote knowledge of Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination and self-government within treaties and political relationships within Canada.

- c. Build multiple networks of conversation, funding, programming, time and space to dialogue with Mi'kmaw communities. Stability of these connections is vitally important.
- d. Continually reinforce good behavior regarding intergroup relations. Symbolism and timing are very important.
- e. Development of the elders' program is important. The Indigenous Advisory Council should work on a protocol and method of coordination. One possibility is to develop a contract with the Native Friendship Centre as all elders know the Centre.

Section B

Dr. Michael DeGagné's Observations and Recommendations, submitted June 2017

In May 2017 I was provided the opportunity to hear and comment on the degree to which Dalhousie University has undertaken the task of indigenizing the institution. Over the course of several days we heard presentations from various stakeholders and service providers at the university and heard their impressions of what Dalhousie was accomplishing and what might be done to improve.

It was clear that there was a real desire to present information, and that those presenting were justifiably proud of what they had accomplished and provided for Aboriginal students. There was also the view that more could be done.

The following points represent impressions and recommendations from my perspective on opportunities for Dalhousie University to move forward with its service and reconciliation agenda. I should also emphasize that these comments are not a commentary on management of programs, the adequacy of budgets, or the efficacy of one program over another. The comments I focused on were at a strategic level, not a call for targeted resources.

5. There could be an improved sense of how the Aboriginal activities at the university are driven by a guiding principle in the university's mission or values statement. This could reflect the value of reconciliation to the institution.
6. There was a repeated call for a "single wicket" approach for Aboriginal students, one that allowed them to enter any of the institution's programs and receive support and guidance through a single portal.
7. The "co-location" of Aboriginal and Black Nova Scotian programs was discussed from several viewpoints. Although there are social and programmatic advantages to having these programs together, separate programs are advisable from my point of view.
8. Indigenous faculty members are taking on a disproportionate amount of the programmatic and support work for Aboriginal students. While additional indigenous faculty would address this issue, the main concern appears to be more formal recognition for the work that is being done, and acknowledgement of the efforts by faculty in this regard. Who is the champion for indigenous faculty? Who brings forward policy initiatives for Aboriginal faculty and students?
9. There was discussion of the university's references to Mi'kmaq specifically versus the broader Aboriginal community. This is an area where policy needs to be developed. A specific reference to Mi'kmaq is called for in most cases given the special history and relationship with the Mi'kmaq community, but a clear openness to a broader Aboriginal agenda would make Dalhousie's efforts more consistent with the rest of the Canadian university system.
10. There is an opportunity for a community consultation process to develop a clearer understanding of how the university appears to Aboriginal students, especially in regional Mi'kmaq communities. This consultation would benefit from discussions at both the high school level and within the existing Aboriginal student body.
11. There are advantages in the development of an Aboriginal student HUB, one which allows for a centralized coordinating space for students and faculty, and one that has sufficient staffing for Aboriginal programs and student success services.

12. From a strategic perspective, I advise using the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations solely as a broad guide for future progress, rather than strictly following individual recommendations. There could be the development of a reconciliation plan, with extensive Dalhousie community involvement, that sees reconciliation through a university lens and celebrates achievements to date.
13. Faculty members recommend more carefully defining service and community connectedness in relation to formal recognition of work, and in tenure applications. This would help develop a better understanding of the current over-reliance on indigenous faculty in advancing the institution's Aboriginal agenda.
14. Many of the Aboriginal programs and services contemplate an increasing role for elders. Elders provide a valuable service, rarely say no to increasing workloads, and in many institutions they have become exhausted. Elder services could be better coordinated centrally, perhaps through an Aboriginal services HUB.
15. There are policy development opportunities around the role of elders and their work within the institution as well as guiding principles for cultural practices, for example smudging and tobacco use.
16. There is always the need to further acknowledge positive and progressive practices with respect to Aboriginal students, services, and programs. A formal recognition program of this work could be contemplated.
17. Consider a formal mentorship program for indigenous faculty and by indigenous faculty through the Centre for Learning and Teaching with a view to improving indigenization in teaching and curriculum development.
18. Consider a formal coordinated outreach to other universities to develop a best practices manual, perhaps through an Aboriginal services HUB.
19. The role of a senior advisor on Aboriginal issues to the President has been developed in a variety of ways across the university system. There are Senior Advisors, Vice-Provosts, and assistant Vice-Presidents, as well as dedicated Chairs. These positions send a strong signal to the institution that Aboriginal issues and reconciliation are a high priority.

In general, I was left with the broad impression that many seek to have Aboriginal issues, and specifically Mi'kmaq issues, become a greater priority for Dalhousie University. Many of these recommendations will be seen as a demonstration of the university's commitment. These recommendations can be implemented starting with the development of a senior and ongoing source of advice within the institution, professional development across the university, and progress on the development of a centralized space and focus for Aboriginal services, one which provides a place for advisors, student success support, and the co-location of service, liaison, recruitment, and elder support.

Indigenous Strategy External Advisors' Schedule of Meetings

During the visit to Dalhousie, the external advisors participated in the following meetings with various stakeholder groups and individuals.

May 18:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 9:00-9:30 | Dr Richard Florizone, President, and Dr Carolyn Waters, Provost and Vice-President Academic |
| 9:30-9:45 | Dr. DeGagné and Dr. Florizone met briefly together |
| 9:45-10:30 | Indigenous Strategy Committee |
| 10:30-12:00 | Indigenous faculty members (Gail Baikie, Amy Bombay, Diana Lewis, Julie Marcoux, Debbie Martin, and Margaret Robinson were present) |
| 12:00-1:30 | Lunch |

- 1:30-2:00 Indigenous Studies minor discussion with Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences faculty members Diana Lewis and Margaret Robinson
- 2:00-2:30 IB&M Initiative, Schulich School of Law (Michelle Williams and Heather McNeil)
- 2:30-3:00 Art Stevens, Agriculture Campus
- 3:30-4:00 Arig Al Shaibah, Vice-Provost Student affairs
- 4:00-4:30 Jasmine Walsh, Assistant Vice-President, Human resources
- 4:30-5:00 Melanie Farrimond and Alan Surovell, Transition Year Program
- May 19:**
- 8:30-9:00 Kara Paul, past Program Manager of the Aboriginal Health Sciences Initiative
- 9:00-9:30 Joe MacEachern, Program Manager, Indigenous and Diversity Programs, Faculty of Medicine
- 9:30-10:00 Judy MacDonald, Interim Director, School of Social Work, Nancy MacDonald
- 10:30-11:30 Alice Aiken, Vice-President Research; Christine Macy, Dean, Architecture and Planning; Andy Cochrane, Dean, College of Continuing Education; Marty Leonard, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies; Donna Bourne-Tyson, University Librarian; Krista Kesselring, Associate Dean Academic, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
- 11:30-12:00 Indigenous Student Collective (Brent Young)
- 12:00-2:00 Extended lunch with Elders-in-Residence (Geri Musqua-LeBlanc and Deb Eisan)
- 2:30-3:00 Mark Filiaggi, AVP Research, and Susan Spence, Vice-Provost Planning and Analytics
- 3:30-4:00 Isaac Saney, Director of TYP
- 4:00-4:45 De-brief with Indigenous Strategy Committee

Appendix 2

Consultations with Dalhousie University Faculties and Units by the Indigenous Strategy Committee

Faculty of Agriculture: David Gray, Dean and Campus Principal; Emmanuel Yiridoe, Associate Dean Academic; Chris Cutler, Associate Dean Research and Graduate Studies; Keltie Jones, Assistant Dean Students and Academic Administration; Balakrishnan Prithiviraj, Assistant Dean International; Queena Crocker-Smith, Faculty Administrator (April 6, 2018).

Faculty of Graduate Studies: Marty Leonard, Dean; Adam Donaldson, Associate Dean; Eileen Denovan-Wright, Associate Dean (April 11, 2018).

Faculty of Dentistry: Benjamin Davis, Dean; Ferne Kraglund, Assistant Dean Student Affairs; Mary McNally, Professor (April 11, 2018).

Faculty of Science: Chris Moore, Dean; Sandra Walde, Associate Dean Academic; Patricia Laws, Assistant Dean Student Affairs (April 16, 2018).

Faculty of Management: Sylvain Charlebois, Dean; Vivian Howard, Associate Dean Academic; Mike Smit, A/Associate Dean Research; Anna Cranston, Assistant Dean Administration; Louis Beaubien, Associate Dean Strategy; Benoit Aubert, Director, Rowe School of Business; Peter Duinker, Director, School for Resource and Environmental Studies; Lori Turnbull, Director, School of Public Administration; Sandra Toze, Director, School of Information Management (April 17, 2018).

Faculty of Computer Science: Andrew Rau-Chaplin, Dean; Christian Blouin, Associate Dean Academic; Robert Beiko, Associate Dean Research (April 25, 2018).

Faculty of Medicine: David Anderson, Dean; Anne Weeden, Assistant Dean and Executive Director of Operations; Constance LeBlanc, Associate Dean CPD; Roger MacLeod, Associate Dean Research; Linda Penny, Chief Operating Officer; Andrea Rideout, Assistant Dean Admissions; Shauna O’Hearn, Global Health Office; Andrew Warren, Associate Dean PME; Darrell White, Senior Associate Dean Education (May 7, 2018).

Office of the Vice-President Research/Research Services: Alice Aiken, Vice-President Research; Mark Filiaggi, Associate Vice-President Research; Ian Hill, Associate Vice-President Research; Nancy Hayter, Assistant Vice-President, Research Services; Stephen Hartlen, Assistant Vice-President, Industry Relations; Sara Daniels, Chief of Staff, Chloe Westlake A/Chief of Staff (May 15, 2018).

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences: Frank Harvey, Dean; Jure Gantar, A/Associate Dean Academic; Howard Ramos, Associate Dean Research (May 22, 2018).

Faculty of Architecture and Planning: Christine Macy, Dean (May 24, 2018).

Provost Office: Carolyn Watters, Provost and Vice-President Academic; Kim Thomson, Chief of Staff (May 25, 2018).

University Libraries: Donna Bourne-Tyson, University Librarian; Elaine MacInnis, Associate University Librarian; Sarah Stevenson, Associate University Librarian; Marlo MacKay, Communications Advisor; Janice Slauenwhite, Administrator; Sandra Dwyer, Director, Human Resources; Anne Matthewman, Associate University Librarian; Michael Moosberger, Associate University Librarian; Michelle Paon, Associate University Librarian; Julie Marcoux, Data Librarian (June 12, 2018).

Indigenous Student Centre and Elders-in-Residence: Geri Musqua-LeBlanc, Coordinator, Elders-in-Residence; Michele Graveline, Indigenous Student Advisor (June 13, 2018).

Faculty of Engineering: John Newhook, Dean; Josh Leon, Professor and former Dean, Pemberton Cyrus Associate Professor and A/Associate Vice-President Academic; Kathryn Hemsworth, Student Engagement Coordinator; Krystal Donahue, Manager, Curriculum and Accreditation; Tim Little, Assistant Dean, Undergraduate Students (June 18, 2018).

Faculty of Health: Erna Snelgrove-Clarke, Associate Dean Academic (June 20, 2018).

Human Resources: Jasmine Walsh, Assistant Vice-President Human Resources; Laura Neals, Director, Academic Staff Relations; Chris Hattie, Director, Employee Relations; Tracy Rands, Director, Talent Management (June 22, 2018).

Advancement: Peter Fardy, Vice-President (July 3, 2018).

Schulich School of Law: Camille Cameron, Dean; Naiomi Metallic, Assistant Professor; Michelle Williams, Lecturer and Director, Indigenous Black & Mi'kmaq Initiative; Richard Devlin, Professor (July 17, 2018).

Government Relations: Sara Daniels, A/Assistant Vice-President Government Relations (July 27, 2018).

Dalhousie Indigenous Advisory Committee (August 28, 2018). This was a full-day retreat, during which we heard from many members of the Committee, including Aaron Prosper (Eskasoni First Nation), current President of the Dalhousie Student Union. Input from this retreat led to material amendments to the draft Strategy document.

Dean's Council (September 3, 2018).

Provost Committee (October 9, 2018).

Priority 5.2 (Diversity and Inclusion) Steering Committee (October 16, 2018).

College of Continuing Education: Andrew Cochrane, Dean; Isaac Saney, Director, Transition Year Program; Jennifer Hann, Director, University Prep/Pathway Programs (October 22, 2018).

Appendix 3

Selected Community Groups and External Stakeholders

1. Atlantic Policy Congress (APC)
2. Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM)
3. Native Council of Nova Scotia
4. Tripartite Forum Education Working Group
5. Native Friendship Centre Halifax
6. Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK)
7. Atlantic Aboriginal Advisory Network Group
8. Grand Council
9. Aboriginal Support Workers (secondary education)
10. *Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch*
11. Unama'ki College (Cape Breton University)
12. Indigenous Advisory Council (Dalhousie)
13. Dalhousie Indigenous Student Collective (DISC)
14. Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

Appendix 4

Selected Dalhousie Reports

1. *Belong: Supporting an Inclusive and Diverse University* (Committee for Strategic Priority 5.2, 2015)
2. *Report from the Committee on Aboriginal and Black/African Canadian Student Access and Retention* (Amy Bombay and Kevin Hewitt, 2015)
3. *Breaking Barriers: Report by the Task Force on Access for Black and Native People* (Wayne MacKay, 1989)
4. *Promoting Success for Aboriginal Students* (Allyssa Graybeal, 2011)



Shared Services Potential across the
Halifax Regional Municipality for
Indigenous Student Access & Success
in Post-Secondary Education

Feasibility Study, October 2018

Kara Paul
Project Associate
Student Affairs
Dalhousie University

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE MI'KMAW AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY MEMBERS, FACULTY, STAFF, & STUDENTS FOR SHARING YOUR KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM & TEACHINGS WITH THIS STUDY.

WELA'LIOQ



The eight-pointed star is a Mi'kmaq symbol representing the eight districts of Mi'kma'ki, the four directions, the four sacred colours, and the four parts of being (mental, physical, emotional, & spiritual).

Graphic inspired by cover art of Marie Battiste's book, *Decolonizing Education: Nourished learning spirit*.

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1.0 ABSTRACT

In 2017-2018, Dalhousie University engaged in a feasibility study to examine “*Shared Services Potential Across the Halifax Regional Municipality for Indigenous Student Access and Success in Post-Secondary Education.*” The purpose of this study was to explore the feasibility of a possible shared service model or consortium that will support Indigenous student access and success in PSE institutions in the Halifax Regional Municipality. To answer this the question, the study employed conversation engagement style that respects Mi’kmaw and Indigenous traditions of teaching, learning, and sharing through storytelling. The project associate engaged with the local Mi’kmaw Communities, Mi’kmaw and Indigenous Organizations, Mi’kmaq and Indigenous faculty and staff, and Mi’kmaq and Indigenous post-secondary education students. The findings of the engagement across multiple groups produced six common themes, six consortia recommendations and eight further recommendations to address and support Indigenous access and success of Indigenous post-secondary education students. Consortia recommendations include community partnerships, multi-institutional Mi’kmaw/Indigenous Studies Program, Mi’kmaq Language courses, multi-institutional Mi’kmaw and Wolastoqiyik PhD Program, Mi’kmaw House of Learning, Elders-in-Residence Program, Student Orientation Program and student crisis planning. Other recommendations include: development of institutional wide framework and polices on racism; Indigenous education for all PSE faculty, staff, and management; review of absences and bereavement policies; and to foster communication and connection with community education directors and guidance counselors; develop policy on transferability of Indigenous student across PSE institutions; overarching community funding policies; develop financial support strategies for student success; and increase complement of Indigenous faculty and staff.

2.0 LIFE STRUGGLE of the MI’KMAW PSE STUDENT

Friday morning of the first week of the Fall 2018 semester, I got a phone call from the Principal of one of the Mi’kmaw Community High Schools. There was no small talk exchanged but an urgent question “Me’ el-lukwen Dalhousie?” which translates to “Do you still work at Dalhousie?” Hearing the anxiousness in her voice, I asked what’s going on and how can I help? I was told a new Dalhousie Mi’kmaw student was in crisis and needed immediate intervention. To give context to the urgency of this phone call, a week prior, a Mi’kmaw student (age 19) of the same community, committed suicide during the first week of her first semester of her post-secondary education.

The principal asked how quickly can I get to her location, as she was in a bad state and needed a familiar face that she could trust. I arrived at her residence within five minutes to pick her up to and take her to get something to eat. Mi’kmaw tradition is to share food while sharing stories and building relationships. To our mutual relief, we already knew each other, as Eliza¹ attended Dalhousie’s Aboriginal Health Sciences Junior University Program during the summer of 2016. Eliza credited the Junior University experience for inspiring her to pursue medicine and attend Dalhousie University. It turns out Eliza was accepted into one of the most competitive direct-entry undergraduate programs offered at Dalhousie University. Over sushi, she shared that

¹ Student’s name was changed to protect her identify.

she was overwhelmed and struggling with the huge changes in her life, such as moving from a small Mi'kmaw community to the city, the university environment, the sizes of her classes, lack of familiar faces (didn't recognize other Mi'kmaq/Indigenous students, staff or faculty) and the grief of recently losing a friend to suicide. I shared with her my early experiences in post-secondary education and we managed some laughs between the tears.

Over the next few hours, I showed Eliza around the city, we visited the Halifax Central Library and the Dalhousie Indigenous Student Centre. I wanted to show Eliza what Halifax and Dalhousie University have to offer. I let her know, that the first few weeks of post-secondary are always difficult to navigate for all students and that there are support services available to her. Explaining that the isolation and loneliness she was feeling will get better as she meets new people and develops new relationships. We shared smudge with Michele (Indigenous Student Advisor) and other Mi'kmaw/Indigenous students. This seems to help her calm down a bit but she seemed so sad. We visited admissions and came up with a set of options for her to think about over the weekend. I stayed with Eliza until her father arrived to take her home. She decided to go with the option of transferring to a university closer to home and moving back home. Eliza plans to return to Dalhousie for her second year.

There are many stories like Eliza's however, I chose to share this particular experience to demonstrate the barriers and struggles experienced by Indigenous post-secondary students. Growing up and living in close-knit Mi'kmaw and/or Indigenous communities is a very different experience in comparison to the social, political, economic structures of Canadian society. The call to return home is strong, as we are community-oriented people. Many Mi'kmaq and Indigenous students are coming from schools where most of their teachers are Mi'kmaq and/or Indigenous. Many are also coming to post-secondary as ESL students, therefore should receive accommodation like other ESL students. Another important thing to consider is that many students may be experiencing the inter-generational trauma that is the legacy of the Indian Residential Schools, as many of our parents, grandparents, and elders are survivors.

In the last several weeks since I was called to Eliza's aid, the Mi'kmaw Nation has been in crisis and in mourning. In the span of two weeks there were eight deaths, four to natural causes, and four young lives lost to the killer, suicide. I myself, have been struggling with the grief of these precious lives lost.

During this time, I attended Senator Murray Sinclair's Belong Forum lecture where he shared his wisdom of building a society of belonging for all Canadians. For too long Indigenous People have not been welcomed and have not really belonged in the new nation of Canada. I was stuck deeply by many things he said that night, but by one thing in particular.

“Indigenous people don't have mental health problems, we have colonial violence problems.” Senator Murray Sinclair, 2018

Post-secondary educational institutions have the power of influence to shape Canadian society to be more inclusive while honoring all of our heritages, Indigenous and settler alike.

We need to do better, let's do better

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action in 2015, there is a renewed focus on Indigenous post-secondary education. Universities Canada developed 13 principles on Indigenous Education “to guide Canada’s universities as they continue work to enhance access and success for Aboriginal students in higher education” (Universities Canada, 2015). Dalhousie University’s commitment to Indigenous student access and success dates over 40 years. In 1970, Dalhousie’s Transition Year Program² (TYP) was created to increase access and participation for Mi’kmaq and African Nova Scotians in Dalhousie Universities programs. In response to the wrongful imprisonment of Donald Marshall Junior and to “address racism in the legal system,” the Indigenous Blacks and Mi’kmaw Initiative³ (IB&M) was established in 1989 to increase representation of African Nova Scotian and Mi’kmaq in the legal profession in an effort to reduce discrimination and racism.

A more recent initiative was the Aboriginal Health Sciences Initiative⁴, active from 2009 through to 2017. The Aboriginal Health Sciences Initiative (AHSI) was created to help address the underrepresentation of Indigenous Health Care providers in the Atlantic Region. AHSI’s was formed in consultation with the Aboriginal Health Sciences Advisory Committee, which was made up of community members from Mi’kmaw and Wolastoqiyik Nations, Mi’kmaw Kina’matnewey, and representatives from both Dalhousie University and Cape Breton University. The AHSI’s mandate was to build strategies and programming to support the access, retention, and success of Indigenous students in the health professional programs. In doing so, AHSI created targeted outreach strategies, academic access programs, Junior University camps, Indigenous health research, Indigenous health curriculum and course development while facilitating strong relationships with the local and national Indigenous communities. AHSI often represented and provided voice for Dalhousie at many Indigenous educational and health tables.

3.1 BACKGROUND

Building on the years of experience and lessons learned through the work of the Transition Year Program, the Indigenous Blacks and Mi’kmaw Initiative, and the Aboriginal Health Sciences Initiative, Dalhousie University seeks to broaden its focus to support student access and success to all Indigenous students attending post-secondary education (PSE) programs.

While seeking to enhance student access and success, it is important for PSE institutions to appreciate that Indigenous student’s participation in the Canadian education system is complicated at best. Historically, education has been used as a tool of assimilation and subjugation of Indigenous Canadians, therefore it is important that PSE works towards inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Gallop, 2016). For example, post-secondary education’s success matrix often includes GPAs, courses and degree completion rates whereas Indigenous people’s definition of success often include “ability to maintain cultural integrity,” “finding their gifts,” and “responsibility of reciprocity” (Pidgeon, 2008).

² <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/cce/programs/transition-year-program.html>

³ <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/law/indigenous-blacks-mi-kmaq-initiative.html>

⁴ <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/health/programs/aboriginal-health-sciences-initiative--ahsi-.html>

“Since education has historically been a key site for colonization of Indigenous peoples, in order to improve educational outcomes, these colonizing processes must be reversed and education systems must be re-indigenized.”
(Dr. Marie Battiste, 2013)

Dalhousie is committed to enhancing recruitment, retention and degree completion of Indigenous students in direct-entry undergraduate programs. Indigenous student success in post-secondary education (PSE) requires holistic community and cultural engagement, as well as individual and institutional capacity development to enhance student enrolment, experience, learning, and employment outcomes. The numbers of Indigenous faculty and staff members remain relatively low across most of Nova Scotian PSE institutions, although there has been some growth. This is relevant because visibility of and engagement with Indigenous faculty and staff, and exposure to Indigenous curricular content, epistemologies, and pedagogies are known benefits for Indigenous (and indeed, all) learners, contributing to their access to and success in post-secondary education.

“For many Indigenous people, learning is holistic, lifelong, land-based, experiential, rooted in Indigenous languages and cultures, spiritually oriented, and a communal activity, involving family, community and Elders.”
(Canadian Council of Learning, 2007)

The project timeline was from 2017-2018. A project associate was hired to work within Dalhousie’s Student Affairs to engage local Mi’kmaq community, Indigenous post-secondary students, and Indigenous faculty and staff of PSE institutions in Nova Scotia. The initial project proposal, developed by Associate Vice-President, Dr. Fiona Black, included examining a possible shared service models for Indigenous access, success, and curriculum for all the post-secondary institutions in Nova Scotia.

The Vice-Provost of Student Affairs Dr. Arig al Shaibah, and the Director of Student Access and Academic Support, Quenta Adams, provided the initial and on-going direction. Further guidance was provided by a number of Dalhousie Indigenous colleagues and the Indigenous Advisory Council. Also, the project engaged with Mi’kmaq Kina’matnewey post-secondary consultant, Ann Sylliboy for feedback on the project proposal. As the project associate, Kara Paul researched post-secondary Indigenous student access, success, and curriculum literature as it pertained to a consortium framework, it was concluded to effectively tackle all of these important parts, would require a longer timeline, therefore the project was adapted.

3.2 SCOPE OF PROJECT

The scope of this project is to explore whether and how an institutional consortium or collaborative model, engaging multiple post-secondary educational institutions in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), might enhance the efficacy of direct-entry undergraduate student access and success supports for Indigenous PSE learners, with a particular emphasis on Mi’kmaq students. In particular, the following access and success support services were in the scope of this study:

1. Access
 - ✚ Bursaries
 - ✚ Marketing and outreach
 - ✚ Orientation programs
 - ✚ Pre-program transition/preparatory support

2. Success
 - ✚ Holistic advising (academic and career)
 - ✚ Peer mentor programs
 - ✚ Cultural supports
 - ✚ In-program learning and academic support

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The study, the “*Shared Services Potential across the Halifax Regional Municipality for Indigenous Student Access and Success*” used a semi-structured interview method that employed conversational engagement style that respects Mi’kmaw and Indigenous traditions of teaching, learning, and sharing through storytelling. There were numerous communications between the project associate and Mi’kmaw community members, Indigenous faculty and staff members, and student groups on the best forum and timelines for engagement. Proper Indigenous community engagement allows time to develop a relationship of trust before consultation begins. In an effort to encourage participation, posters were printed and posted around campuses, e-invites sent to self-identified students, campus screens advertised events, and Facebook pages were created.

When meeting with individuals or groups, the project associate would give an overview presentation of the scope of the project, and gave some guidance on level of conversation, asking interviewees to offer recommendations ranging from “pie in the sky” to what we can do currently to better support Indigenous student access and success. The project associate was diligent to not influence or steer the engagement.

The project proposal went through Dalhousie Research Services for evaluation. Research Services did not consider this project a research study, therefore did not need ethics approval.

4.1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

During the initial presentation, many of the interviewees had questions that led to great discussions. In the spirit of Indigenous ways of sharing, free flow of discussion was welcomed and encouraged. Interviewees would cover many of the topics outlined in the interview questions, however, if they did not cover most areas of interest, the facilitator would prompt with a variation of the following interview questions:





1. What kinds of things do you think institutions can do to improve Indigenous student access?

2. What kinds of things do you think communities can do to improve Indigenous student access?
3. What kinds of things do you think institutions can do to improve Indigenous student success?
4. What kinds of things do you think communities can do to improve Indigenous student success?
5. Which of these things could be done collaboratively across multiple institutions and communities?
6. What people resources (knowledge, time), community resources (relationships, networks) and material resources (funds, space) would need to be considered for a collaborative model to be successful?

4.2 SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE (DATA) & ANALYSIS

The method of engagement or sharing of knowledge was very similar regardless of group size, however the method of recording the engagement varied with size of group. In single person engagement, the project associate took notes. In larger groups, the project associate would focus on facilitating the session, which was audio recorded, supported by as student note-taker when possible.



After all the notes and recordings were transcribed, each interview was organized and categorized into areas of access and success across communities and institutions. Possible shared service models or consortia were identified. The next step was to look for recurring topics, ideas, recommendations, and experiences, further categorizing into themes. The results were grouped according to type of engagement:







-  Mi'kmaw Community engagement
-  Mi'kmaw and Indigenous Organization Engagement
-  Mi'kmaw and Indigenous Faculty and Staff Engagement
-  Mi'kmaw and Indigenous PSE student engagement

4.3. MI'KMAW COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Due to Dalhousie University's locations in Halifax and Truro, the Mi'kmaw Communities located on the mainland of Nova Scotia were selected for community engagement. Numerous attempts were made to engage each of the following Mi'kmaw Communities, regrettably not all mainland Mi'kmaw Communities were available for engagement. Any future expansion of study should include all communities.

Mainland Mi'kmaw Communities:

-  Acadia First Nation
-  Annapolis Valley First Nation

-  Bear River First Nation
-  Glooscap First Nation
-  Millbrook First Nation
-  Paq'nkek First Nation
-  Pictou Landing First Nation
-  Sipekne'katik First Nation

This study engaged with Sipekne'katik and Glooscap First Nations. The post-secondary education files of the Mi'kmaw Communities of Annapolis Valley, Bear River, Glooscap, and Pictou, are administered through the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM) and some communities have directed my engagement to CMM's Education Advisor, Marlene Martin.




It is important to note, the five Mi'kmaw communities in Unama'ki (Cape Breton) collectively send a significant number of post-secondary students to the Halifax Regional Municipality, therefore need to be included in any future engagement and/or expansion of this study.

4.4 MI'KMAW/INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATION ENGAGEMENT

In the province of Nova Scotia, a number of Indigenous organizations have official and unofficial relationships, agreements, partnerships, and memorandum of understanding with Dalhousie University and other PSE institutions in the Halifax Regional Municipality. For the purpose of this feasibility study, exploring possible shared service models of access and success of Indigenous post-secondary education students, engagement was limited to Indigenous organizations that carried PSE files.

As with most Indigenous organizations, staff have busy schedules and scheduling was an ongoing challenge. Regrettably, the Mi'kmaw Friendship Centre was not available for engagement. Any future expansion of this study should include the Mi'kmaw Friendship Center.

The project associate met with the following organizations. Descriptions of each of these organizations are provided below:

-  Atlantic Aboriginal Advisors Networking Group (AAANG)
-  Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK)
-  Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM)

4.4.1 ATLANTIC ABORIGINAL ADVISORS NETWORKING GROUP (AAANG)

The Atlantic Aboriginal Advisors Networking Group (AAANG) is a collective of Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, and Indigenous advisors and/or staff employed at PSE institutions in Atlantic Canada. The mandate of this group is to collaborate, strategize, share knowledge and best practices to support Indigenous student access and success. Founded in 2012, AAANG holds annual roundtables that are supported and endorsed by Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey and PSE institutions of the Atlantic.

4.4.2 MI'KMAW KINA'MATNEWWEY (MK)

In 1998, the Mi'kmaq Education Act was signed giving educational jurisdiction over Mi'kmaq communities/bands education in Nova Scotia. This is the first such education act signed between the Crown and an Aboriginal group in Canada. As part of the Mi'kmaq Education Act, the Mi'kmaq-Kina'matnewwey⁵ organization was established for the purpose of supporting the development and delivery of educational programs and services under this Act. Representing the 12 of the 13 Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia, the board of directors are made up the 12 Mi'kmaq First Nation Chiefs of Nova Scotia. Millbrook First Nation does not participate of Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewwey. A primary focus of Mi'kmaq-Kina'matnewwey has been on the Mi'kmaq language preservation and Mi'kmaq curriculum inclusion of grades kindergarten through to 12. In response to Mi'kmaq post-secondary students' needs for inclusion and support, Mi'kmaq-Kina'matnewwey has been branching out into the post-secondary and sometimes public sector. The engagement with Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewwey was done with PSE consultant, Ann Sylliboy. Ms. Sylliboy is a Dalhousie Bachelor of Social Work alumni.

4.4.3 CONFEDERACY OF MAINLAND MI'KMAQ (CMM)

Founded in 1986, the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq⁶ (CMM) is a tribal organization with a mission "To proactively promote and assist Mi'kmaq communities' initiatives toward self-determination and enhancement of community." There are currently seven Mi'kmaq First Nation communities in Nova Scotia making up the confederacy: Annapolis Valley, Bear River, Glooscap, Millbrook, Sipekne'katik, Paqtnkek, and Pictou Landing. A number of CMM's membership communities have entered into a consortium of sorts, in regards to post-secondary education called the Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program.

Dalhousie has a long history of partnership with CMM. The CMM's Native Post-Secondary Counselling Unit opened its doors on Dalhousie campus in 1988. Since its opening, the Confederacy has supported Indigenous post-secondary students attending school in the Halifax Regional Municipality in the creation of this welcoming Indigenous space. The Native Post-Secondary Unit provided access to Native Post-Secondary Liaison Officer, computers, printers, coffee, and tea to facility connections with other First Nation Students. In 2016, Dalhousie and CMM entered into a new partnership, where the unit and staff are co-funded through Dalhousie University. The new centre is now called the Indigenous Student Centre⁷ and former Native Post-Secondary Liaison Officer position is now a Dalhousie University's Indigenous Student Advisor.

The engagement with Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq through the Education Advisor, Marlene Martin. Her files include administration of the post-secondary assistance program for member communities and the former Native Post-Secondary Unit. At one point, Marlene served as the Native Post-Secondary Liaison Officer.

⁵ <http://kinu.ca/>





⁶ <http://cmmns.com/>

⁷ https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/communities/indigenous.html

4.5 INDIGENOUS FACULTY & STAFF ENGAGEMENT

The primary focus of Mi'kmaw/Indigenous faculty and staff engagement was with groups or individuals employed in PSE institutions in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). The community of Indigenous faculty and staff in the HRM is smaller compared to other Canadian cities. The community is close-knit, and as a consequence of our size individuals have busy professional schedules and heavy workloads. There were numerous strategies to coordinate busy schedules in setting up engagement sessions. Unfortunately, not all of the PSE institutions were available for engagement. Several attempts were made to connect with the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), however with no known Indigenous faculty or staff, regrettably they were not able to participate.

List of PSI's of faculty and staff that participated in study:





-  Dalhousie University
-  Mount Saint Vincent University
-  Saint Mary's University
-  Nova Scotia Community College (Ivamy Campus)

4.6 MI'KMAW & INDIGENOUS PSE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

There were numerous communications and coordination with the Indigenous advisors and staff to host student engagement sessions. Dates and times were carefully considered to accommodate staff and maximize student turn out. To promote student engagement gatherings, posters were printed, posted, and emailed, e-invite were sent to Indigenous self-identified students, Facebook invitations posted on Indigenous student groups, twitter and campus screens were all utilized to promote student participation.

Student engagement gatherings had student representation from all the following PSE institutions. A number of attempts were made to include NSCAD's Indigenous students, regrettably they are not included in this feasibility study.

Total of 17 students interviewed at the following PSE institutions:

-  Dalhousie University
-  Kings University
-  Mount Saint Vincent University
-  Saint Mary's University

5.0 FINDINGS

The main objective of this study is to explore the feasibility of possible shared service model(s) or consortium that will support Indigenous student access and success in PSE institutions in the HRM. Each group had distinct knowledge specific to their community, be that their First Nation community, nation, affiliated organization, or school. However, the knowledge shared had some recurring themes around access and success of Indigenous students. It was also expressed

that access and success are interconnected, therefore there is some overlap between the two as described below.

5.1 PARTNERSHIPS

The overarching theme of engagement across groups is the need for strong, meaningful partnerships between Mi'kmaw/Indigenous communities and PSE institutions. Indigenous communities are not mere community stakeholders but are First Peoples with whose treaties are the foundation of Canada. Post-secondary educational institutions in Nova Scotia all sit on the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq (also known as Mi'kma'ki) therefore have an obligation to ensure the preservation of Mi'kmaw history, language, epistemologies, and pedagogies. While also expanding the Western traditional way of teaching and learning to encompass Indigenous knowledge systems, facilitating Indigenous student access and success.

There is a long history of relationship and partnership in Mi'kma'ki that is the foundation of Canada. Canadian treaties range from the Peace and Friendship Treaties of the East Coast, to the Number Treaties in the Prairie provinces, to the ongoing treaty-making processes on the West Coast. The specifics of each treaty may differ from territory to territory, however at the core of each treaty is partnership and coexistence. These long historical practices need to be considered when entering into partnerships between PSE institutions and Mi'kmaw/Indigenous communities.

“Building relationships and meaningful partnerships with L’nu⁸ communities need to be central priority for all post-secondary educational institutions.”
(Ann Sylliboy, *Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey*)

As sign of commitment to true partnership, engagement with multiple groups urged true meaningful partnerships require long term strategies, policies, dedicated senior administrative staff, and core budgets. This allows for the relationship to be built and nurtured on multiple fronts.

5.2 FINANCIAL BARRIERS

Canada is a prosperous and wealthy nation that is built on the treaties of Indigenous and settler peoples. However, Indigenous people continue to experience highest poverty levels in Canada. A staggering 25% of Indigenous Canadians are living in poverty and 40% Indigenous children continue to experience a life of poverty (Canadian Poverty Institute, 2018). The burden of poverty is felt by many Indigenous students especially for Indigenous women with children and young families. Engagement with multiple groups, especially the student groups, raised issues of poverty and financial barriers to higher education. Poverty continues to be a significant barrier to access and success of Indigenous students. Discussions highlighted many barriers and posed solutions.

Post-secondary education institutions can facilitate Indigenous access to higher education with the development of robust scholarship and bursary programs dedicated to Indigenous

⁸ L'nu means the people in Mi'kmaq. We use the term L'nu to identify ourselves and other Indigenous people of the Turtle Island (North America).

students. Some First Nations and Inuit students qualify for funding from the Indigenous Services Canada's Post-secondary Student Support Program that is administered at the community level. However, this Program was capped at 2% annual growth since 1996, falling far behind inflation rates and Indigenous population growth. Furthermore, this program is not accessible to Métis and Non-Status First Nations students (NCCAH, 2009). The Liberal Government announced a 90 million increase over two years, starting in 2017-18 for the Post-Secondary Student Support Program, however this is to be shared nationally (INAC, 2017). Another way educational post-secondary institutions in HRM can support Indigenous student access is to waive application fees. Application fees and online payment processes were identified as barriers for Indigenous students. As many did not have access to online payment options. Application fee waivers would remove this barrier.

At the community level, qualifying for and maintaining community sponsorship through the Student Support Program is an ongoing challenge for many students. As mentioned earlier, these programs have been capped at 2% for over 20 years, therefore student who qualify are still living in poverty. There is a new federal budget increase, however communities are continuing to work with limited PSE budgets therefore, have policies in place that limit eligible funding months and minimum course load requirements. The minimum course load requirements for many communities is over and above what PSE institutions deem as full-time study. Provincial student loans programs and PSE institutions considers three courses per semester as full-time study. This inconsistency may deepen burden experienced by students already stressed trying to make the transition from secondary to post-secondary education. The course load requirements are especially straining for Indigenous students studying sciences, engineering, and health sciences.

Engagement with multiple groups also expressed the need for tutorial supports. In most cases, community funders do not have the budget to support tutoring. Hiring a private tutor is expensive and out of financial reach for many Indigenous students. Developing Indigenous specific tutorial programs would support Indigenous student success.

Housing and transportation were also financial barriers to access and success identified by multiple groups engaged. Finding affordable housing in the city is an ongoing challenge for many Indigenous students. Many can't afford to live in the city and have requested that communities and post-secondary institutions work together to solve this issue. Due to high housing costs, students elect to live in community and travel back and forth to school. This comes with its own set of challenges in finding consistent and accessibility transportation options. The Mi'kmaw communities of Eskasoni and Membertou have entered into a partnership to provide transportation from their communities to Cape Breton University and Nova Scotia Community College's Marconi Campus with much success. A similar partnership should be examined with surrounding communities of Millbrook and Sipekne'katik.

5.3 TRANSITIONS-MOVING FROM COMMUNITY TO PSI ENVIRONMENT

The transition from small Indigenous communities to post-secondary institutions is an ongoing challenge for many Indigenous people. There are different types of Indigenous communities, however many are rural with small populations. For many Indigenous students accessing post-secondary education in Halifax Regional Municipality, the city and campuses are

large and quite different from home communities. The urban location of many college and university campuses can be overwhelming for students especially during the initial part of their studies. There is much to navigate such as, the city itself, housing, transportation, classes, campuses, academic support, student support, wellness supports, and cultural supports.

Engagement with the multiple groups discussed the need for post-secondary orientation designed specifically for Mi'kmaw and Indigenous students. The Indigenous student orientation serves to introduce students to Indigenous post-secondary environment, staff, faculty, Elders, and academic supports while also creating a welcome environment. Ideally the orientation would take place over weekend prior to the beginning of the Fall semester. To promote participation, student orientation need to be done in collaboration with Mi'kmaw communities and Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey. Students also expressed the hope for more Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey presence in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Coordinated post-secondary and community recruitment strategies that include both in-community and in-university activities. The strategy will foster partnerships and create familiarity of with post-secondary institutions. Indigenous students need to be able to imagine themselves studying in universities and colleges. Many spoke of the importance of developing mentor relationships early in student's life. This can be facilitated by community and university visits, summer camps, tours, and opportunities to job shadow at with various departments and faculties.

Other strategies mentioned around access and success were in regards to direct-entry programs. Engagement with community organizations and students both expressed the need for more diverse program delivery options. These included programs and courses to be delivered in community and more online class options.

5.4 LONELINESS, ISOLATION & RACISM

In engagement sessions with Indigenous students, many shared their experiences in PSE institutions, disclosing incidents of racism and hardship. Many of student discussions were pragmatic with specific recommendations around access and success, however a concerning emerging theme were the feelings of sheer loneliness and isolation compounded with on-going experiences of racism and Eurocentric supremacy. As educational institutions ensuring accessibility to all people that aspire to PSE, we must address the exclusion and Eurocentric supremacy that hold up Canadian education systems.

The common theme of loneliness, isolation and racism was not limited to only Indigenous students but extended to the experiences shared by Indigenous Faculty and staff. The number of Indigenous people employed at post-secondary institutions vary however, many have low numbers of Indigenous faculty and staff. Indigenous faculty and staff often work in solos within faculties or departments regularly encountering Eurocentric dominance of the academy. They are often burdened with heavy workloads and administrative commitments beyond their job descriptions that is not expected of their non-Indigenous colleagues. Further compounding the burden experienced by many Indigenous faculty and staff is the precarity of employment status, as many faculty and staff are in short-term contracts and appointments.

Interviewees expressed the need for post-secondary institutions to draft frameworks on racism and microaggressions. The framework will outline how to recognize racist behaviors and situations, how to negotiate/navigate racist situations, remediation measures, and concrete consequences to perpetrator of racism.

Indigenous students' experiences of loneliness, isolation, and racism support the need for more Indigenous education at all levels of post-secondary educational institutions.

5.5 INDIGENOUS EDUCATION FOR ALL LEVELS of PSE INSTITUTIONS

To remediate existing misconceptions, misunderstandings, and lack of awareness and education about Indigenous People in Canada, all groups engaged spoke of the need to educate all students and employees at all levels of the post-secondary institutions. The education should include the history of Turtle Island, the First Peoples of Turtle Island, the treaties that uphold Canada, Canadian policies on Indigenous education such as Indian Residential Schools and current policies that continue to legally marginalize Indigenous people in today's Canadian society, such as the Indian Act and the ongoing funding disparity around child welfare, education, and community infrastructure.

These findings further support the need for the academy to expand scholarship, teaching, and learning to include and value Indigenous ways of knowing, learning, and teaching. This systematic shift will benefit Indigenous peoples but will also benefit all people accessing higher education, as many students may not belong to the Eurocentric dominate group that makes up the most of the academy.

“University workers don’t know how to deal with us, they don’t know how to talk to us, and don’t know anything about us.” (Indigenous PSE Student)

5.6 INCREASE COMPLEMENT OF INDIGENOUS FACULTY & STAFF

Engagement with multiple groups discussed the need for more Indigenous faculty and staff employed at post-secondary educational institutions. More Indigenous faculty and staff hired in Indigenous designated roles and non-designated roles will contribute to the climate and environment of an educational institution. The increase complement of Indigenous faculty and staff will strengthen the collective effort towards the Indigenization of the academy and in turn contribute to the building of safe and welcoming environment for Indigenous students.

*“We need more familiar faces in the institutions.”
(Marlene Martin, Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq)*

A barrier to increasing the complement of Indigenous faculty and staff is the precarity of many current PSE Indigenous employees. The common results are Indigenous faculty and staff are stressed while forced to regularly look for employment elsewhere. This is a form of colonial violence. It is vital for post-secondary institutions looking to commit to Indigenous student access and success also commit to the job security and wellbeing of current Indigenous faculty and staff.

6.0 CONSORTIA RECOMMENDATIONS

In the recent years, there has been a national uptick in effort to Indigenize the academy. Most certainly attributed to the release of the Truth and Reconciliation and Calls to Actions (2015) that are centred on education and training. The important systemic shift that is required to work towards Indigenization of the academy will involve both settler and Indigenous folks to commit to decolonizing systems, institutions, and self. However, time and time again, it is Indigenous faculty and staff that are called to do the work. To do this work authentically and inclusively, it is vital that post-secondary institutions and Mi'kmaw/Indigenous communities partner and work together. This partnership and collaboration can take on many forms but it is imperative that it is built on a solid foundation of meaningful relationships and partnerships.

Recommendations to address access and success of Indigenous students and possible shared service models include university presence in community, community presence in universities, mentors, tutors, Indigenous education for all levels of PSE institutions, communities to Halifax transportation, student housing, inter-university courses, inter-university Mi'kmaw language courses, inter-university Mi'kmaw/Indigenous programs such as an Indigenous Major and Mi'kmaw/Indigenous House of Learning Centre. It was also expressed that Indigenous initiatives and programing need to be part of long-term PSE strategies with sustainable core-funding.

6.1 COMMUNITY & PSE PARTNERSHIPS CONSORTIUM

During the feasibility study's engagement session across multiple institutions, Mi'kmaw organizations and communities, the overarching message was the need for ongoing, meaningful relationships and full-fledged partnerships between the Mi'kmaw communities and post-secondary institutions. The partnership will need university and community personnel dedicated to developing and implementing shared priorities that contribute to the access and success of Mi'kmaw/Indigenous communities, students, faculty, and staff. It is important that community knowledge holders are valued and compensated for their knowledge at equity with academic knowledge holders.

6.2 MI'KMAW/ INDIGENOUS STUDIES PROGRAM CONSORTIUM

Consultations with Indigenous students, faculty and staff found that most would appreciate a multi-institutional and community collaboration around Indigenous studies program and courses. Students at each post-secondary institution expressed the need for more Indigenous course offerings at their respective institutions. They also expressed the desire to freely take Indigenous courses offered at other institutions without the added burden of letter of permission approval. One solution is to cross-list Indigenous courses among multiple institutions in HRM.

The small number of Mi'kmaw and Indigenous faculty employed in post-secondary institutions in the HRM, and the volume of work required to develop Mi'kmaw /Indigenous Studies programs supports the pooling of resources to develop multi-institutional HRM

Mi'kmaw/Indigenous Studies Program. There are examples of cross-institutional programs such as the Joint Dalhousie-Saint Thomas Mi'kmaq Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work Cohort Program and the Halifax Interuniversity Program in Linguistics offered in collaboration with Dalhousie, Saint Mary's and Mount Saint Vincent University (Dalhousie Academic Calendar 2001/2002).

6.3 MI'KMAQ LANGUAGE CONSORTIUM

In the engagement sessions with Indigenous students at multiple institutions across the Halifax Regional Municipality, students overwhelmingly expressed the desire to study Mi'kmaw language as part of their degree requirements.

“We should have the option to take Mi'kmaq language for our degrees, instead of French or Spanish.” (Mi'kmaq PSE student)

In the last several years, a number of universities in the HRM, have attempted to develop a Mi'kmaw language course in response to the mounting pressure of student requests. The challenges have been finding someone that can teach Mi'kmaw at the post-secondary level. There are strong Mi'kmaw speakers in Unama'ki and they teach in primary, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary school, however recruitment to teach in the HRM has been an on-going challenge.

The best solution is to develop multi-institution Mi'kmaq language courses that are connected to existing linguistics and Indigenous studies programs. It is vital for PSE institutions to contribute to preservation of our beautiful ancient language, as more and more L'nu speak less and less Mi'kmaq. This needs to be taught from Mi'kmaw perspective honouring Mi'kmaw epistemology and pedagogy in program delivery.

6.4 MI'KMAW & WOLASTOQIYIK PHD PROGRAMS CONSORTIUM

The academy is striving to Indigenize their institutions, but instrumental to this process is the need to include knowledge held in Mi'kmaw and Indigenous communities. In order to Indigenize or L'nuize as the Mi'kmaw call it, universities need to partner and collaborate with Indigenous communities, so that the process is built on a foundation of ethics, social accountability, and authenticity. However, many post-secondary institutions currently require the academic recognized credentials such as Master's degree and Ph.Ds. As a result of this barrier, Mi'kmaw and Indigenous Organizations are recommending a collaborative Mi'kmaw and Wolastoqiyik graduate and Ph.D. program that will focus on L'nu epistemologies, pedagogies and student's success. There is currently a PhD in Educational studies offered in a collaborative partnership with Acadia University, St. Francis Xavier University and Mount Saint Vincent University.

6.5 MI'KMAW/INDIGENOUS HOUSE OF LEARNING CONSORTIUM

The Native Post-Secondary Counselling Unit has provided safe space for Mi'kmaw and Indigenous students since opening its doors in 1988. In the years since, Mi'kmaw/Indigenous student enrollment has increased, Indigenous initiatives have grown Indigenous programs,

services, faculty, and staff. Currently, Dalhousie Indigenous Student Centre occupies the main floor of building on Dalhousie's Studley Campus. The Indigenous Student Centre houses the Indigenous Student Advisor and the Elder- in-Residence Program.

Over the years, there have been multiple initiatives that have engaged with the Mi'kmaw community. The Mi'kmaw/Indigenous House of Learning has been recommended multiple times. The House of Learning was recommended during engagement that led to the developed the Aboriginal Health Sciences Initiative and now presently with the "*Shared Services Potential across the Halifax Regional Municipality for Indigenous Student Access and Success.*" The most recent engagement recommendation is for the Mi'kmaw/Indigenous House of Learning be a centre of excellence shared by the multiple post-secondary institutions in HRM. The Centre of Excellence consortium would be the main Indigenous PSE hub in the HRM supportive of holistic education and services, including classroom, smudge space, student centre, Elders, Indigenous faculty and staff space. This consortium along with the with the recommendation of cross-institutional Mi'kmaw/Indigenous Studies Program consortium would work synergistically supporting one other.

6.6 ELDERS-IN-RESIDENCE CONSORTIUM

Dalhousie University's Elders-in-Residence Program was originally developed to support the students of the Indigenous Minor Program. The need for Elders on campus quickly outgrew the small Indigenous Minor and expanded to an institutional wide program. During the feasibility study engagement with HRM post-secondary institutions, many expressed the need for an Elders-in-Residence Program in their universities and colleges. It seems many other local institutions unofficially use Elders from Dalhousie's Elders-in-Residence Program. There is an opportunity to support our Elders' work balanced with the HRM need for Elders presence in PSE institutions. The consortium recommendation and logistics will need to be in consultation with the Elders-in-Residence Program and local Mi'kmaw/Indigenous communities inside and outside Halifax Regional Municipality. Another area identified during engagement sessions was to recruit more Mi'kmaq Elders to participant in the current Elders-in-Residence program. A possible solution is to recruit a junior Elder or Mi'kmaw person strong in traditional ways to work with the Elder-in-Residence Program to enhance the Mi'kmaq presence. Catherine Martin would be the ideal person to take on this role as she is highly respected Mi'kmaw film maker, traditional person and the former MSVU Nancy's Chair.

6.7 STUDENT ORIENTATION PROGRAM CONSORTIUM

Engagement with students and others made it abundantly clear, that post-secondary institutions and Mi'kmaw communities need to work together to ensure students are ready, informed, and welcomed into the post-secondary educational environment. The partnerships built between communities and multiple institutions would support the development of an orientation program that is designed specifically for Indigenous students entering post-secondary institutions in the Halifax Regional Municipality. Recently, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey partnered with the Province of New Brunswick to pilot the first Indigenous PSE Student Bootcamp that focused on getting Indigenous students ready for post-secondary education. This boot camp was run over a weekend in August. A similar comprehensive student orientation should be developed specifically

for Indigenous students attending post-secondary institutions in Halifax. This orientation will need to partner with Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey and the local Mi'kmaw communities to ensure participation and success of student orientation.

6.8 DEVELOP STUDENT CRISIS PLAN & PROTOCOL CONSORTIUM

All students bring their life experiences along their journey through educational systems. The Canadian education system has been a tool of assimilation, oppression, and subjugation for Indigenous peoples in Canada. It leaves its mark on our communities, our people, and our students. As a result, this has created a climate of a distrust of educational institutions that stems from the Indian Residential School atrocities. Working collaboratively with Mi'kmaw communities, it is essential we developed Indigenous student crisis plans, protocols, and procedures to ensure students have access to appropriate services and interventions in a timely and productive manner. This needs to be done in collaboration with the Mi'kmaw community. Furthermore, it is vital that professors and frontline workers both at PSE institutions and communities to become familiar with crisis plans, protocols, and procedures.

7.0 ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Develop institutional wide framework and policy on racism

Racism continues to be perpetuated in our societies, our institutions, our pedagogies, our curricula, our classrooms and in the everyday interactions. Some have claimed ignorance for infractions. Many believe that because there was no racist intent that it is not racism. These types of racist interactions are termed micro-aggressions. However, regardless of what you call it, it all has its root in racism. Indigenous people and many people of colour are inundated multiple times a day with these so called microaggressions. The effects are cumulative and damaging.

Develop racism framework and policy, that outlines how to recognize microaggressions and racism, examples of how to address it, how to navigate incidents, outline available supports, and how to report incidents. Another important piece of this framework and policy would be the remediation, reconciliation, and consequence of infractions.

7.2 Indigenous education for all PSE faculty, staff and management

As educational institutions, we are in the business of educating students, therefore it is essential that all our students, faculty and staff are educated in Indigenous histories, treaties, Canadian Indian Education Policies, Indian Residential Schools, contemporary issues, and the overall resilience of Indigenous People. Indigenous education competencies must be a requirement of all PSE personnel and students. The education of all personnel can be done in collaboration with the Human Resources branch of post-secondary institutions as ongoing institutional competency for employees.

7.3 Review university absences and bereavements policies

Indigenous people are primarily community-oriented and family centric. Many students attend post-secondary for the betterment of their family and community. Community and family obligations are a natural part of Indigenous life and are a constant tension for students between their studies and community obligations. Putting yourself first (studies) before community needs can feel selfish and unnatural for Indigenous students. Also, who is your family is not the same as in mainstream Canadian society. Extended family play a significant role in the raising of children in Mi'kmaw and many other Indigenous communities. This is not to be taken lightly or as some afterthought information. Indigenous students will miss more school due to family and community responsibilities and obligations. This is especially true when there is a death in the family or community. University absences and bereavement policies need to be reviewed and adapted to reflect Mi'kmaw and Indigenous principals.

7.4 Foster communication with community guidance counsellors & community post-secondary counsellors

During a recent student crisis, it obvious communities are not aware of who the Indigenous advisors are and what supports are available to Indigenous students in the Halifax Regional Municipality. Indigenous student access and success can be better facilitated if post-secondary educational institutions and community education directors and guidance counsellors get to know each other. Due to underfunding of Indigenous education and priorities in the community, guidance counselors have their workload filled with their share of student and community crisis's. Guidance counselors need some support in getting to know what programs are available at PSE's both in terms of student supports and academic programs. Institutions can do more outreach to communities however, hosting guidance counselor gatherings regularly may be more productive.

7.5 Develop policy that supports transferability of Indigenous students across multiple post-secondary educational institutions

Mi'kmaw and Indigenous students have the propensity to move across institutions while accessing post-secondary education. There are multiple factors that influence student's decision to transfers to multiple schools while pursuing their degree programs. The reasons range from location, family obligations, family deaths, program availability, grades, racism, and their general experience while in that particular school. This can result in Indigenous students engaging in post-secondary education for longer periods of time due to losing credits that are not transferable. Community sponsorship policies limit eligible funding months therefore, these particular students run out of funding before degree completion. Developing a collaborative policy or framework to address transferability of Indigenous students and their credits across institutions to support ease of mobility and degree completion would offer another way to support student success in PSE within the Halifax area.

7.6 Communities develop an overarching PSE student funding policy

The Post-secondary Student Support Program is administered at the community level however, each community has its own specific set of qualifications, procedures, and policies attached to this program. Qualifying for and maintaining community sponsorship through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program is an ongoing challenge for many students. The minimum course load requirements for many communities is over and above what PSE institutions deem as full-time study. Provincial student loans programs and PSE institutions considers three courses per semester as full-time study. This inconsistency may deepen burden experienced by students already stressed trying to make the transition from secondary to post-secondary education. The course load requirements are especially straining for Indigenous students studying sciences, engineering, and health sciences.

Engagement with a number of groups expressed the need for overarching PSE funding policies revisions. Revisions include full-time course load requirements to reflect PSE full-time course load definitions, minimum course load requirements consider the heavy workload of students studying STEM and health related disciplines.

7.7 Develop financial support strategies for student success

Across Canada Indigenous people continue to live in poverty and many Indigenous students are burden with this reality. In collaboration with Mi'kmaw community, PSE institutions should develop financial support strategies aimed at increasing Indigenous student success.

These should include:

- ✚ Robust scholarship and bursary programs
- ✚ Tutorial programs designed specifically for Mi'kmaw/Indigenous students
- ✚ Affordable single and family housing options
- ✚ Flexible & affordable childcare options
- ✚ Explore transportation options from the surrounding Mi'kmaw communities to HRM

7.8 Increase complement of Indigenous faculty & staff

Engagement with multiple groups discussed the need for more Indigenous faculty and staff employed at post-secondary educational institutions. More Indigenous faculty and staff hired in Indigenous designated roles and non-designated roles will contribute to the climate and environment of an educational institution. It is also important for PSE institutions to address the present precarity of many Indigenous faculty and staff.

Msit No'kmaq: All my relations

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