

# ABORIGINAL RELATIONS & RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS





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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENTS

The following documents represent the dedication and collaboration of the University of Alberta Students' Union, Aboriginal Student Council, Native Studies Students' Association, and University of Alberta stakeholders to ensure the rights and needs of Indigenous Peoples on Campus and the work needed for meaningful reconciliation at the University of Alberta.

The development of the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee mandate and recommendations has been made possible through the many years of ongoing engagement, passion, and dedication from Nathan Sunday, the founder and ongoing chair of the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee, collaboration between current and past University of Alberta Students' Union Council, Aboriginal Student Council, Native Studies Students' Association, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students-at-large, and the stakeholders across campus. This process has challenged the University of Alberta Students' Union and the Indigenous community to have open conversations, develop lasting relationships founded on mutual respect, uncover and bring together significant issues that Indigenous students face, and to work together in rectifying these issues. Together we will do what is right and not what is easy.

Through the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee and application of the recommendations the University of Alberta Students' Union, Aboriginal Student Council, and stakeholders will work to develop a lasting strategy to fulfill the mandate and ultimately make the University of Alberta a stronger, more educated, and interconnected space for reconciliation. Together we can acknowledge the histories of the Aboriginal Peoples, address the current realities, and create a future that we can all be proud of.

This committee, its mandate, and the recommendations are the first steps in creating a welcoming campus, rooted in beneficial relationships that cultivate the sharing of diverse knowledge amongst and beyond the campus community. Further, we will work to have the advocacy of the Students' Union, the functioning of the Students' Council, Aboriginal education for students, and the operations and policies of the Students' Union reflect the needs of Indigenous peoples, together.

Again, we would like to thank everyone for their passion, hard work, and dedication in the creation of these recommendations. This would not have been possible without the truth, respect, honesty, wisdom, bravery, and love that everyone has put into the creation of this powerful collection of documents.

Thank you and hiy hiy,

Reed Larsen  
President  
University of Alberta Students Union

Katherine Belcourt  
President  
Aboriginal Students Council



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Tan'si

Nathan Sunday nitisiyhkâson ekwa kâmiyosicik kinosewak ohci niya.

Hello, my name is Nathan Sunday and I am from Goodfish Lake First Nation. Since its inception as an ad hoc committee, I have had the privilege of serving as the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee chair. When I had first brought the idea of creating the precursor to ARRC ("Truth and Reconciliation Commission Implementation Committee") to Students' Council on February 28, 2017, I could have never imagined how far we would come. I could have never imagined how much work we would complete and how much change to the Students' Union we would usher. In a word, I am proud.

These recommendations represent the fruit of many peoples labour, cultivated and nurtured for over two years. It is because of the strong roots planted by the ad hoc committee and those before us that the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee was able to grow and flourish. My thanks, as chair, to the many people who have worked with the Committee and on the recommendations cannot be overstated. Without the involvement of each and every person who has worked with the Committee, we would not be where we are today.

These recommendations, which will last for years to come, represents the efforts of myself and many others to change the University and the Students' Union for the better. They are the hopes and dreams of all the people who have touched the recommendations wishing for a better University. Even if the changes seem minimal, small drops of rain can make ripples across the water. It is my hope that, through the realization of these recommendations, we will be able to alleviate some of the challenges and barriers faced by Aboriginal students. In the future, I want my story - of being the first person in my family to go to post-secondary - to be an outlier and not the norm amongst Aboriginal students. I want my family, my community, and the seven generations after me to feel welcome and accepted on campus. I want the generations yet to come to have a positive experience at the University of Alberta, to be able to thrive in a healthy campus environment. While I may not be able to do much change, these recommendations for me represent something I can help do.

In closing, I wanted to end with a quote from Robert Kennedy that sums up my reasoning, and those who have worked tirelessly to create change, for creating and working on this Committee, "There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why... I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?"

ay ay,

Nathan Sunday  
Native Studies Councillor  
Chair, Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee



## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The following individuals, through their contributions to the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee and Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation ad hoc committee, have aided in the creation of the recommendations. Without their involvement, none of this would be possible:

### Current membership

- Nathan Sunday, Chair
- Katherine Belcourt, Aboriginal Student Council President
- Ariyanna Callihoo, Aboriginal Student Council Vice President
- Reed Larsen, Students' Union President
- Akanksha Bhatnagar, Students' Union Vice President Academic
- Andre Bourgeois, Students' Union Vice President Student Life
- Mpoé Mogale, Students' Union Arts Councillor
- Shuaa Rizvi, Students' Union Science Councillor
- Colin Mulholland, Native Students Students' Association Vice President

### Past membership

- Kimberley Fraser-Airhart, Native Studies Students' Association Vice President
- Heather Lindsay, Native Studies Students' Association Vice President
- Rhiannon Arcand, Native Studies Students' Association President
- Deirdra Cutarm, Students' Union Arts Councillor/Student at large
- Brooke VanderKooi, Student at large
- Jocelynn Proulx, Student at large
- Megan Arcand, Student at large
- Brandon Christensen, Students' Union Medicine & Dentistry Councillor
- Delane Howie, Students' Union Campus Saint-Jean Councillor
- Haley Lefferson, Students' Union ALES Councillor
- Ilya Ushakov, Students' Union Vice President Student Life
- James Thibaudeau, Students' Union Education Councillor
- Shane Scott, Students' Union Vice President Academic
- Michael Sandare, Undergraduate Board of Governors Representative
- Emily Howell, Students' Union Education Councillor
- Manpreet Grewal, Students' Council Administrative Assistant
- Rebecca Taylor, Manager of Discover Governance
- Breanna Palmer, Students' Union Open Studies Councillor
- Cassidy Halcrow, Student at large



## **MISSION**

Our mission is to empower and amplify First Nations, Métis, and Inuit voices to positively impact the lives of all students.

## **PILLARS**

Five pillars support our mission:

- We cultivate relationships;
- We empower students to take action;
- We create space for discussion, understanding, and vulnerability;
- We actualize change; and
- We educate our community.

## **VISION**

Our vision is a welcoming campus, rooted in mutually-beneficial relationships that cultivate the sharing of diverse knowledges among and beyond the campus community.

## **VALUES**

Our values are rooted in the Seven Gifts or Seven Grandfather Teachings, which include:

- Embrace truth in histories and stories.
- Respect all knowledges.
- Embody honesty always.
- Demonstrate comfort in humility.
- Seek wisdom.
- Show bravery in adversity.
- Love all peoples.



## HOW THE STUDENTS' UNION WORKS

The University of Alberta Students' Union represents all undergraduate students, acting as a strong advocate for students to the university and to all levels of government. The SU is an official body, established under the Alberta Post Secondary Learning Act to represent the needs of undergraduate students.

The SU operates a variety of businesses to serve student needs and interests, including bars and restaurants, a convenience store, and a full service print shop. The SU also provides a wide range of student services designed to meet the needs of all of our members. The SU owns and operates the Students' Union Building (SUB), and runs a budget of more than \$14 million, with more than 200 staff.

Both student-run and student-centric, the SU prides itself on being a proactive organization that is sensitive to the needs of individuals and the student body as a whole.

## WHAT IS BYLAW?

Bylaws are the primary legislation of the Students' Union and set out the basic legal structure and operational parameters of the Students' Union. Any internally created rule not in accordance with the bylaws is of no force and effect so far as there is a conflict.

The bylaws are concerned with major governance issues such as the structure of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the Students' Union as well as its finances. Elections, referenda, faculty associations and access to information are some additional areas in which Council has legislated. The process by which bylaws are amended can be found in the Standing Orders of Students' Council.

## WHAT IS POLITICAL POLICY?

Political Policies are statements of principle, set out by the Students' Council, that direct the Executive Committee in their advocacy efforts. They define the formal position of the Students' Union on the political issues of the day. It then becomes the job of the Executive Committee to implement the political policies as they see fit.



## ADVOCACY

### **The Students' Union shall advocate for increased access to childcare services at the University of Alberta.**

According to the Students' Union's 2017 Student Survey, Aboriginal students are nearly four times more likely than non-Aboriginal students to care for dependent children. As Aboriginal students already face barriers to enrolment, Aboriginal students who parent face even more.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to increase its advocacy for improved access to child care services across all campuses. Moreover, the Students' Union should engage Aboriginal students who parent (for example, by hosting a focus group) to better understand the intersectional barriers faced by Aboriginal students who parent.

### **The Students' Union shall increase advocacy for the implementation of either a mandatory Native Studies course or the implementation of Aboriginal knowledges and pedagogies in classes.**

Recently, universities and colleges across Canada have introduced mandatory Native Studies courses. At the University of Alberta, a group of Aboriginal students and allies have been pushing the University of Alberta to adopt this practice. This movement has become even more prevalent in recent years, as the adoption of mandatory Aboriginal content has appeared in a number of Students' Union executive platforms.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to further advocate to the University of Alberta on the matter of mandatory Aboriginal content. Such advocacy should be informed through discussions with Aboriginal students and University faculty and staff.

### **The Students' Union shall continue to advocate towards the building of the Maskwa House of Learning.**

According to the University of Alberta's strategic institutional plan, "For the Public Good," the University of Alberta is committed to building the Maskwa House of Learning. An ongoing project since 2005, the Maskwa House of Learning is meant to be:

*A place of understanding, welcome, and cultural connection, where Indigenous and non-Indigenous students together can grow and celebrate the unique and proud histories of Indigenous peoples, and where Indigenous students can access social, cultural, and spiritual supports that enable their academic success.*



As the project has yet to make any progress, the Students' Union must increase its advocacy on this front. Only by increasing pressure on the University will the thirteen-year project be completed.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to increase advocacy towards the University of Alberta for the building of the Maskwa House of Learning.

### **The Students' Union shall engage in meaningful consultation with surrounding First Nations communities.**

Aboriginal Peoples face the difficult decision of either staying in their home community or attending University. As a result, First Nations students may begin feeling isolated and removed from their culture.

To alleviate this, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to engage surrounding First Nations on issues that affect the students of their community. As a result of fostering closer relationships with surrounding First Nations, it is the hope that the Students' Union will work collaboratively with First Nations to host events which bring their cultures to campus.

### **The Students' Union shall support relationship-building with surrounding Aboriginal communities through consultation and through support of current programs, such as:**

- Recruitment; and
- Invitation to events.

Currently, the University of Alberta maintains and builds relationships with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit groups across Alberta to better support Aboriginal students. However, although the Students' Union has begun strengthening relationships with Aboriginal groups from across the University, it has yet to venture out and build connections with First Nations and external Aboriginal organizations.

As such, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union support ongoing efforts by the University of Alberta in regards to community engagement and relationship building. Such relationship building may include, but is not limited to, offering support at Open House, involvement in TAWOW, helping the University of Alberta connect with Aboriginal student leaders, or aiding community engagement efforts by University of Alberta Indigenous Student Recruiters.

Such support should be solely based on a genuine commitment by the Students' Union to meaningfully engage and work with First Nations and Aboriginal organizations. In the spirit of positive relationship building, the Students' Union



should not only invite surrounding First Nations and Aboriginal organizations to relevant events, but also attend events initiated by Aboriginal communities, as invited.

**The Students' Union shall advocate for an increase in support for Aboriginal student services on all campuses, including services that are culturally supportive and trauma-informed.**

In order to ensure the safety of Aboriginal students at the University, it is important that services which are accessed by Aboriginal students – especially mental health supports – are culturally safe. Cultural safety, as defined by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, “is grounded in indigenous knowledge and experience, and is based on the recognition of cultural diversity and the influence that social inequalities and imbalances of power have on relationships between the service provider and service user.” Specifically, it is important that mental health supports are trauma-informed and culturally safe, so as not to re-traumatize Aboriginal students seeking help.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to advocate towards the University of Alberta, as well as all levels of government, that culturally relevant and trauma-informed services be available to Aboriginal students across all University campuses.

**The Students' Union shall advocate for the creation of a dedicated Aboriginal student gathering space at Campus Saint-Jean.**

Currently Aboriginal students at Campus Saint-Jean do not have campus access to an Aboriginal gathering space. Should a student wish to access Aboriginal services, they must use the shuttle to North Campus.

As access to cultural resources is a student's right, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls the Students' Union to advocate for the creation of an Aboriginal student office and/or cultural centre at Campus Saint Jean.

**The Students' Union shall increase its advocacy towards the federal government on issues of Aboriginal post-secondary funding.**

As stated by the Assembly of First Nations, “Since 1996, the number of students funded through PSSSP [Post-Secondary Student Support Program] has been capped at approximately 25,000 students, this is despite an increase in [the] First Nations population and increased high school graduation rates.” Within the context of Treaty 6, where the University of Alberta is situated, this cap violates First Nations' treaty right to educational access.

As a result, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls the Students' Union to increase its advocacy towards the federal government to fix



this situation, as well as the lack of funding dedicated to Inuit and Metis peoples. Additionally, the Committee recommends that the Students' Union stress this point to advocacy partners, including the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA).

**The Students' Union shall encourage the University of Alberta to conduct an Aboriginal Student Success Survey, parallel to the 2014-15 survey. Moreover, the Students' Union should encourage the University to report publicly on the survey's findings, including both a stand-alone analysis and a comparative analysis with the 2014 survey. The Aboriginal Student Success Survey should be completed every 5 years.**

The Aboriginal Student Success Survey, a survey of Aboriginal students at the University of Alberta, was commissioned by the Office of the Provost and completed in 2015. The purpose of the survey was, "to get a better sense of the demographics of the Aboriginal student population on UofA campuses, as well as the satisfaction students receive from their post-secondary institution." The survey findings, as well as the final report to the Office of the Provost (Enhancing Aboriginal achievement at the UofA: From "lifting the whole people" to learning "to lift each other up") provided information on the Aboriginal student experience and listed a number of recommendations.

Due to the importance of data in policy and administrative decisions, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to encourage the University to continue the Aboriginal Student Success Survey. Also, the findings of the Survey should be accessible to the public and completed every five years.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee also recommends that the Students' Union include an FNMI portion in its annual student survey. The FNMI portion should be similar to, but less comprehensive than, the Aboriginal Student Success Survey. The inclusion of an FNMI portion in the Students' Union annual student survey should be done in collaboration with Aboriginal stakeholders at the University of Alberta.

**The Students' Union shall advocate that all faculties provide Aboriginal-specific advising positions.**

Currently, not all faculties at the University of Alberta have Aboriginal-specific advising positions. During the 2017-2018 academic year, the proportion of Aboriginal students increased to 4.0%, with the number of Aboriginal students at the University of Alberta expected to increase every year.



Through engagement with students, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee has begun to understand the important role Aboriginal advisors play in the academic success of Aboriginal students. The overall feedback received at the September 27, 2018 town hall regarding Aboriginal-specific advisors was positive. However, only Augustana Campus and the Faculty of Arts have Aboriginal-specific advising positions.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union – specifically, the Vice President Academic – to work with the University of Alberta and its faculties to increase the number of faculty-specific Aboriginal advising positions.

**The Students' Union shall advocate for a centralized website that deals exclusively with Aboriginal programming and content at the University, OR to restructure the Aboriginal/Indigenous Index of Web Links so as to centralize it to include all information pertinent to Aboriginal students.**

Currently, the University of Alberta has an Aboriginal/Indigenous Index of Web Links that “serves the public by providing a directory of links to University of Alberta initiatives, activities, partnerships, and programs related to Indigenous and Aboriginal communities.” Although an important initiative, the website is not user-friendly or updated regularly.

To better enable Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students to access Aboriginal initiatives/activities at the University of Alberta, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to advocate for a redesign of the website. Such advocacy should be centred around, and include, the following:

- Centralizing all information regarding Aboriginal students at the University of Alberta;
- Including a section or page for Aboriginal student groups at the University of Alberta;
- Employing an Aboriginal-centric web design; and
- Adding a “what are you looking for/ask us” chat box on the page that is staffed during university hours. The chat box should be similar to that found at the University of Alberta Libraries and should enable people to ask questions regarding Aboriginal services, programs, scholarships, etc.



**The Students' Union shall advocate that plaques be placed around campus narrating the art that depicts racist and colonial violence, and supporting initiatives engaging the campus community in the implications of art.**

Throughout its engagement with students, it has come to the attention of the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Commission that there are a number of works showcased at the University of Alberta that illustrate a purely colonial narrative. Examples of such art include:

- The Glyde mural in Rutherford Library; and
- The Trade and Commerce: A History of Edmonton mural in HUB.

Although this is clear, the answer of how to deal with such depictions of art is less so. As stated by Justice Murray Sinclair, the chair of the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission: "the problem I have with the overall approach to tearing down statues and buildings is that it is counterproductive to reconciliation because it almost smacks of revenge or smacks of anger."

In adopting this approach, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to advocate for the creation and placement of plaques near colonial/racist art which provides viewers with additional context to the art. Specifically, such plaques must be visible and accessible (i.e., in English, French, Cree, Braille, etc).

**The Students' Union shall aid Aboriginal Student Council in securing a sustainable funding model.**

Aboriginal Student Council, originally called the Native Student Club, has been an association at the University for over 25 years. The overall goal of the Aboriginal Student Council is to:

*Improve the lives and studies of Aboriginal students and foster healthy relationships both inside and outside of the Indigenous community. ASC seeks to create a safe and welcoming space to reaffirm and foster balance in spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional health through the promotion of culture, politics, academics, athletics, and other interpersonal interests.*

As both a registered student group and under the umbrella of the Dean of Students, Aboriginal Student Council advocates and hosts a suite of programming for both undergraduate and graduate students. In order to complete its work, Aboriginal Student Council requires the resources necessary to effectively engage both students and the University. The Students' Union, on the other hand, has a number of resources but lacks the knowledge, expertise, and connections to facilitate Aboriginal programming.



The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to aid the Aboriginal Student Council in securing resources to complete its mandate. Such collaboration should be done with the full autonomy of both the Students' Union and Aboriginal Student Council in mind, and led by the needs and voice of Aboriginal Student Council. Moreover, the Students' Union is to act in a supportive capacity in such collaboration, and only with the express consent of Aboriginal Student Council.

**The Students' Union shall advocate for institutional commitments, at every level of the University, to develop financial, housing, and job opportunities for Aboriginal students.**

**Financial**

According to the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations' Policy Statement on Improving Access for Indigenous Peoples, "the federal government provides funding to Indigenous peoples with status through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP). For the last two decades, the PSSSP has not provided adequate support to meet the demand of potential students."

For non-status Indians, this situation is even worse: eligibility for the PSSSP and other Aboriginal post-secondary funding often focuses on status Indians and Inuit peoples exclusively. This is further compacted by that fact that, of the awards available to Aboriginal students at the University of Alberta:

*66 per cent (\$2.4M) was awarded to students who self-declared as Metis, followed by Status First Nations at 24 per cent (\$879,722). These rates are not consistent with enrolment rates of Indigenous students, which saw 53 per cent identified as Metis and 37 per cent identified as Status First Nations.*

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation calls on the Students' Union to increase advocacy towards reducing financial barriers for First Nations (status and non-status), Metis, and Inuit students.

**Housing**

Currently, the following Aboriginal-specific housing options are available to Aboriginal students:

- Belcourt Brosseau House: Six-bedroom co-ed home with preference given to mature single Aboriginal students. As of 2018, rental rates range from \$546.00 to \$653.00 per month.



- **Aboriginal House:** A four-bedroom home reserve for single Aboriginal students and located near East Campus Village. As of 2018, the rental rate is \$655.00 per month.
- **Marge's House:** Six-bedroom home located in the East Campus Village. As of 2018, the per-bedroom rental price for the four-bedroom unit is \$627.00 per month, and \$821.00 per month for the two-bedroom unit.
- **HUB:** Located on North Campus, the HUB residence is made up of either two-bedroom furnished units or four-bedroom furnished units. As of 2018, the two-bedroom furnished unit is \$6694.00 over an eight-month contract and the four-bedroom furnished unit is \$4912.00 over an eight-month contract.

According to the Students' Union 2017 Annual Survey, Aboriginal students are more than three times more likely than the broader student population to identify themselves as a student-who-parents. Due to escalating maintenance costs, the University of Alberta is slated to close Michener Park, the only residence for students who parent, in 2020. The closing of Michener Park represents a major concern for Aboriginal students who parent, whose numbers continue to grow at the University of Alberta.

Moreover, although the University continues to increase the availability of Aboriginal-specific housing, this effort has not kept pace with the increase in the Aboriginal student population. According to the Annual Report on Undergraduate Enrolment 2017/18, "the overall proportion of Aboriginal students in total headcount hit a new high of 3.4 per cent in 2017/18." This increase has led to a total of 1,081 Aboriginal undergraduate students enrolled in the 2017/18 academic year. As the Aboriginal student population continues to increase, demand for Aboriginal-specific student housing likewise increases.

The lack of Aboriginal-specific housing at the University of Alberta acts as one barrier to rural and on-reserve Aboriginal enrolment. As of 2014, less than 9% of Aboriginal Peoples in Alberta aged 25 to 64 living off reserve have completed a university degree. According to research conducted by Wallace et al. (2014), "housing was found to be the second most important factor (behind finances) for influencing the completion of students' studies with holistic factors including access to housing choice [...], family matters, cultural relationships, and community relationships" (p. 25).

Due to the anecdotal and academic evidence supporting the connection between Aboriginal-specific housing and academic success, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to advocate to the University of Alberta for increased availability of Aboriginal-specific housing.



### **The Students' Union shall advocate for increased accessible and online learning for off-campus students.**

For many Aboriginal Peoples living in rural and remote communities, distance from post-secondary institutions constitutes a major barrier to education. Research conducted by Simon, Burton, Lockhart, and O'Donnell (2014) shows that post-secondary distance education:

*...can mitigate the destructive effects of government policies designed to remove remote and rural First Nations people from their lands. Distance education [...] allows First Nations to assert their sovereignty over their lands and resources and develop their communities with residents staying local.*

Moreover, in its 2016 Comprehensive Institutional Plan, the University of Alberta stated its dedication to building "relationships with Indigenous post-secondary providers in Alberta, to support rural and remote learners through IT supports."

Due to the role distance education can play in mitigating some of the barriers for Aboriginal learners, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to advocate for increased distance learning opportunities.

### **The Students' Union shall advocate to the University of Alberta for the creation of a visual identity specifically for First Nations students and alumni, similar to the work done at St. Thomas University.**

As stated by Shauneen Pete, Indigenization can be understood as "the transformation of the existing academy by including Indigenous knowledges, voices, critiques, scholars, students and materials as well as the establishment of physical and epistemic spaces."

In an effort to Indigenize the University of Alberta and the positive inclusion of Aboriginal Peoples in the branding of the University, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to advocate for the creation of a visual identity specifically for First Nations students and alumni.

Done in collaboration with Aboriginal students, student groups, and the University, such a visual identity should include, but is not limited to, the creation of an alternative logo similar to that done at St. Thomas University.



### **The Students' Union shall advocate to the University of Alberta for the creation and implementation of an Aboriginal achievement strategic plan.**

According to the University of Alberta Students' Union, "strategic planning helps to define direction and priorities, and should be a fundamental activity of any organization." A strategic plan results in the defining of a strategy or strategies and how an organization will allocate its resources to achieve its strategy.

Aboriginal-specific strategic plans have begun to take root at many post-secondary institutions, including the University of Manitoba and Mount Royal University. For example, in its Aboriginal strategic plan Mount Royal University states that it is "committed to the academic and personal success of students by meeting the educational needs of all Indigenous Peoples."

Due to the direction a strategic plan can give to an organization, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to advocate to the University of Alberta for the creation of an Aboriginal achievement strategic plan. The strategic plan should be drafted by a steering committee with equal membership divided between students and University faculty and staff. Any such Aboriginal-specific strategic plan should include implementation and accountability measures, such as benchmarks and timelines, to ensure its realization.

### **The Students' Union shall write an open letter stating its condemnation of racism and discrimination on campus and encourage university administration to sign the letter in support of the message.**

As defined by the Students' Union, "the University of Alberta Students' Union (the SU) is the official body that represents all undergraduate students [...] The SU is a student-centric organization [...] that is sensitive to the needs of individuals and the student body as a whole."

As the representative body for undergraduate students, it is imperative that the Students' Union help create a welcoming and safe environment for all students, especially Aboriginal and minority groups. As stated by third-year undergraduate student Tiffany Johnson, "I've slowly become disenchanted with being able to celebrate my culture at the U of A. There's so much covert racism as well as overt racism."

Through its engagement with students, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee has come to understand the role the Students' Union can play in creating a safer and welcoming campus for all students.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to author a public letter or declaration condemning racism and



discrimination on campus. Furthermore, the Committee hopes that such a letter or declaration can be written in conjunction with the University of Alberta. Lastly, the Committee calls on the Students' Union to act more proactively in situations involving racism.

**The Students' Union shall advocate to the University that all those organizations under the Dean of Students that provide campus services should offer programs or services in support of Aboriginal students.**

Currently, services offered under the Dean of Students include:

- Academic Success Centre;
- Augustana Student and Residence Services;
- Campus Saint-Jean;
- Career Centre;
- Centre for Writers;
- Community Social Work Team;
- Counselling and Clinical Services;
- First Peoples' House;
- Healthy Campus Unit;
- Math and Applied Sciences Centre;
- Office of the Student Ombuds;
- Residence Life;
- Sexual Assault Centre;
- Student Accessibility Services;
- Undergraduate Research Initiative;
- University Health Centre;
- University Health Centre Pharmacy; and
- Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science & Technology.

Improving the health and wellness of Aboriginal students on campus involves the incorporation of Aboriginal worldviews and concepts into student services. One such incorporation identified by the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee is the inclusion of traditional healing/traditional healers into the University Health Centre.

As defined by the First Nations Health Authority, traditional healing is "health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating First Nations healing



and wellness using ceremonies; plant, animal, or mineral-based medicines; energetic therapies; or physical/hands-on techniques” ([www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/traditional-healing](http://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/traditional-healing)). Furthermore, numerous studies have been conducted which illustrate that the incorporation of traditional healing and wellness into health services improves the health of Aboriginal Peoples.

As such, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students’ Union to begin advocacy on the incorporation of Aboriginal knowledge into programs offered by the Dean of Students, be they health-based or otherwise.

**The Students’ Union shall advocate that the University of Alberta Residence Services hire only Aboriginal students for Aboriginal Programmer positions.**

Aboriginal student groups across the University of Alberta articulated to the Committee the need for Aboriginal Programmers to be Aboriginal. Specifically, non-Aboriginal Aboriginal Programmers oftentimes rely heavily on Aboriginal student groups, whom they expected to help them at a moments notice.

As Aboriginal student groups are already overburdened, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students’ Union to work with Residence Services to ensure that only Aboriginal Peoples fill the role of Aboriginal Programmers.



## EDUCATION

### **The Students' Union shall encourage members of the Executive Committee to receive training on Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, as well as the complex relationship Aboriginal Peoples have with Canada.**

The Students' Union is an organization, given power by the Post-Secondary Learning Act, to act as a collective body for undergraduate students at the University of Alberta. The Students' Union is led by Students' Council, a representative student body which is the highest legislative body of the Students' Union. At the top of this is the Executive Committee, which is regulated by Students' Council and is made up of the following elected, paid positions: President, Vice President Academic, Vice President External, Vice President Finance, and Vice President Student Life. As the heads of the organization, the Executives are tasked with advocating on behalf of undergraduate students at the University of Alberta.

The Aboriginal Relation and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to make mandatory Aboriginal/cultural safety training part of its onboarding procedures for all newly-elected Executives. Such training will enable the Executive Committee to better represent the needs and perspectives of Aboriginal undergraduates. One such option is enrolling in the free Faculty of Native Studies MOOC NS 201 Indigenous Canada.

### **The Students' Union should register its current and future senior staff, including the Executive and General Manager, in the Alberta School of Business' Indigenous Partnership Development Program (IPDP).**

The Students' Union, as a 14 million dollar organization, employs a number of staff to ensure its mandate is fulfilled. At the top of this organization hierarchy is the General Manager, who is responsible for overseeing the operations of the Union. Under the General Manager are core managers who also work towards the mandate of the Students' Union. As the senior staff play a large role in Students' Union programming, as well as influence the Executive, ARRC believes it is imperative that they receive appropriate training.

One such option is the joint Faculty of Native Studies and School of Business Indigenous Partnership Development Program (IPDP), which was developed to "help non-Indigenous business and public sector employees work more effectively alongside Indigenous communities with greater understanding." This University-run program will empower SU staff and Executive with the essential understandings that will promote the development of a healthy, strong, reconciliatory relationship between SU leadership and the Aboriginal student body.



**The Students' Union shall provide students the opportunity to learn about Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, either through presentations, the installation of plaques, or advertising Aboriginal initiatives on campuses. Specifically, the Students' Union should provide such opportunities to students that allow for the debunking of myths and stereotypes surrounding Aboriginal Peoples.**

The Student's Union is a leadership body in our local community. The goal of reconciliation falls under the heading of initiatives to address issues facing the student body. Currently, the majority of students do not have the opportunity to learn about the Aboriginal Peoples in Canada while completing their studies. University students who wish to access accurate knowledge about the Aboriginal Peoples in Canada are limited to taking the MOOC and/or a significant investment of time, finances, and study into discovering who the Aboriginal Peoples are. By not making this knowledge more accessible, students at the University of Alberta miss out on a vital opportunity: the relationship of Canadians and Aboriginal Peoples remains a sub-cultural relationship for which not all Canadians know they are responsible.

The Student's Union can play an essential role in opening the accessibility of this knowledge and furthering a culture of reconciliation at the University of Alberta by posting plaques and partnering in the sharing of Aboriginal initiatives on campus. There are a variety of opportunities to partner with Aboriginal student groups on campus in this process, which in itself would be an act of reconciliation.

**The Students' Union shall raise awareness, through public discourse and events, of positive Aboriginal student experiences.**

The voice of the Student's Union on campus has undeniable power. The leadership has been well developed and these recommendations are designed to continue to empower the leadership of the SU.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to demonstrate their position of reconciliation and empowerment by sharing the positive experiences of Aboriginal students with the Students' Union and the University community. Promoting the stories that Aboriginal students share of their own experiences will contribute to the deconstruction of negative stereotypes, promote the voice of Aboriginal students on campus, and facilitate a welcoming, empowered University culture for Aboriginal (and other non-dominant-culture) students.



## OPERATIONAL

### **The Students' Union shall hire an Aboriginal-based expert to conduct an internal organizational review of the Students' Union, and to provide recommendations for future reconciliatory actions.**

For the Students' Union to work towards reconciliation, the organization as a whole needs to look inward at its practices and processes. Specifically, such a review should be done by an individual with a background in reconciliation and Aboriginal Peoples in order to determine where efforts are being made, where the organization can be improved, and most importantly how it can be improved.

As a result, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to commit to such a review. Moreover, the Committee suggests the hiring of a third party with the necessary knowledge and cultural background, so as to provide an unbiased perspective.

### **The Students' Union shall ensure adequate funding in the annual SU Budget Principles to allow for the inclusion of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit elders, as well as any relevant Oskapewsak (Elder Helper).**

Peoples of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit descent rely on Elders and Elder Helpers (Oskapewsak) to pass on cultural teachings from generation to generation. As stated in the University of Alberta's Elder Protocol and Guidelines, "an oskapew (Elder apprentice) assists the Elder in the preparation of a ceremony. If the Elder has their own oskapew, please ensure this person is fairly compensated."

As such, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to continue to provide the funds needed to supply honorariums for Elders and Oskapewsak. Such funds should be a recurring part of the Students' Union annual budget by way of the Budget Principles brought forward to Students' Council each year.

### **The Students' Union shall name a portion of rooms in SUB to reflect the diversity of students at the University of Alberta, as well as to acknowledge the ancestral space on which it sits.**

The University of Alberta, and by extension the Students' Union, sits on Papaschase Cree land in Treaty 6 territory. As it is situated on this land, the Students' Union has an obligation to acknowledge the Papaschase Cree and Treaty 6 territory.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to rename a portion of the rooms in the Students' Union Building to reflect the rich history of Treaty 6 territory. Such rooms should not only represent a symbolic gesture, but should be spaces for learning, with plaques detailing the context of each room's name.



**The Students' Union shall create an accessible and transparent webpage on its official website dedicated to tracking its progress on these recommendations.**

The recommendations housed in this report are expected to take years to complete, with some recommendations taking longer than others. As these recommendations, and their completion, are of interest to all undergraduate students at the University of Alberta, it is important that students are given the opportunity to evaluate the progress of the Students' Union.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to create an open and transparent web page by which students can be kept informed of the completion of these recommendations. Specifically, the Committee suggest that this webpage be mirrored exactly after the Office of the Privy Council's 'Mandate Letter Tracker.'

The Students' Union shall create a Reconciliation Coordinator position within its organizational structure. The role and scope of this position should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Plan orientation and other events throughout the year;
- Assist the Students' Union with ongoing and future consultations with Aboriginal students, organizations, and communities;
- Act as a liaison between Aboriginal Student Council and the Students' Union;
- Arrange for elders and/or traditional knowledge keepers;
- Involvement in policy development;
- Support the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee;
- Arrange or providing training for Students' Council; and
- Serve in leadership development functions.

With the number of Aboriginal undergraduates at the University of Alberta increasing exponentially, the Students' Union is under increasing pressure to represent and provide services to this growing population. Moreover, as the Students' Union continues to focus on reconciliation and positive relationship building with Aboriginal students and groups, the need grows to increase its institutional capacity.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to create a 'reconciliation coordinator' within the organization. Such a position should have embedded within it a direct line of communication with the General Manager and President. Furthermore, the Committee must be involved in the creation of the job description, as well as have a role on the hiring board for the position. Lastly, growth must be built into the position to allow for the creation of a team or directorate, should the need arise.



### **The Students' Union should increase transparency in regards to its work and advocacy for students.**

Through consultation with students, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation has highlighted an urgent need for the Students' Union to increase transparency; specifically, in terms of changes in policy, funding, student rights, academics, and leadership. The Committee heard from students who are either unaware of Students' Council or are apathetic to its work. In regard to both answers, one of the core issues revolves around transparency. Specifically, many Aboriginal students are unaware of the current advocacy and work of both the Executive Committee and Students' Council as a whole.

Trust is an essential element in the relationship between undergraduate students and the Students' Union. By incorporating an organizational approach to transparency, the Students' Union is poised to increase student involvement in the organization.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to undertake a study, either conducted by Students' Council or organizationally, on how the Union can increase its transparency. At the forefront, the voices of undergraduate students should act as the foundation of any such study and provide the Students' Union with practical recommendations on how it can increase its transparency toward students.

### **The Students' Union shall advocate for the inclusion of a session that educates new students on Aboriginal Peoples at New Student Orientation, Eastern Assent, and Basecamp. The purpose of such an event should be to challenge misconceptions and stereotypes about Aboriginal Peoples.**

The mission of New Student Orientation is "to create a positive educational and personal experience for new University of Alberta students." The Students' Union runs New Student Orientation as a contract with the University of Alberta and together, both organizations seek to successfully aid in the transition of new students into university life.

As the University of Alberta and the Students' Union sits on the unceded territory of the Papaschase Cree, it has an obligation to inform students of the historic and continuing histories of Aboriginal Peoples. Furthermore, as an educational event, New Student Orientation is the perfect venue to inform new students of the history of Aboriginal Peoples on this land, both past and present.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to advocate for the inclusion of Aboriginal content within New Student Orientation. Such content should be informed and led by Aboriginal students and faculty at the University of Alberta.



### **The Students' Union shall incorporate Aboriginal programming into the Week of Welcome schedule each year.**

Each year, the Students' Union organizes the Week of Welcome, a weeklong event that provides students with social opportunities and events. Through consultation with students, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee has identified a lack of Aboriginal content during the Week of Welcome.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to incorporate Aboriginal programming into the Week of Welcome. Specifically, the Committee calls on the Students' Union to direct its WOW talent agent to include local Aboriginal musicians and performers in its line-up.

### **The Students' Union shall strive to intentionally hire more people who identify as Aboriginal at all levels of the institution to achieve a diverse workforce as outlined in the 2016 Employment Equity Summary.**

Research shows that companies that employ an ethnically diverse workforce financially outperform those with a more homogeneous workforce. Moreover, studies also suggest that diverse teams work more effectively, produce higher quality work, and have deeper company engagement.

As part of its commitment to diversity, the University of Alberta develops an annual Employment Equity Census to "develop annual statistics as one way of measuring our progress in achieving and retaining a diverse workforce." The Students' Union offers a number of career opportunities for undergraduates and recently graduated people. The Employment Equity Census advertises the following areas as reasons for working for the Students' Union:

- Gain valuable work experience;
- Develop leadership skills;
- Contribute to the campus community;
- Flexible hours;
- On-campus convenience;
- Office space; and
- Staff discounts.



In keeping with the commitments of the University, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to commit to employing a diverse workforce. In order to achieve a more diverse workforce, the Committee suggests the Students' Union adopt the following three strategies suggested by the Business Development Bank of Canada:

- Reach out to specific communities;
- Adjust your training to meet different groups' needs; and
- Rethink your recruitment process to eliminate unconscious bias.

**The Students' Union shall create an Aboriginal Student Success Award, with a minimum value of \$1,000, for which only Aboriginal students are eligible. The availability of such an award should be set at 4 awards per year.**

According to the 2017 Identity Matters Report, Aboriginal students are the least represented group in student governance (Faculty Associations, Students' Council, Students' Union executive) at the University of Alberta. Furthermore, preliminary research shows that there has never been an Aboriginal person on the Students' Union Executive Committee.

According to the University of Alberta, "Indigenous learners face unique financial challenges and barriers, so dedicated and robust financial support programs are required." One way to both increase the financial support available and increase Aboriginal student leadership is the creation of an Aboriginal Student Success Award. As stated by the Students' Union, "the Students' Union Awards strive to recognize outstanding leadership and involvement of University of Alberta undergraduate students in the community."

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to create an Aboriginal undergraduate student award that acknowledges the hard work and leadership of Aboriginal students. Specifically, this award should be valued at a minimum of \$1,000.00 per recipient, with four awards being given yearly.

**The Students' Union shall, in collaboration with campus stakeholders, create and incorporate a public framework around Aboriginal student and community consultation.**

As stated by the National Centre for First Nations Governance, consultation is of critical importance to First Nations. Among other considerations, consultation with Aboriginal Peoples signals "a longer term commitment to build a sustainable relationship and reconcile ongoing issues originating from the past."

Through engagement with Aboriginal students, and particularly Aboriginal student groups, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee has come to understand the importance of meaningful engagement and consultation.



Although the Student Participation Handbook, co-developed by the University of Alberta and the Students' Union, is the formal consultation guide of the Union, the Committee does not feel that it fully reflects the cultural and community realities of Aboriginal Peoples.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to create, in meaningful consultation with Aboriginal students and student groups, a framework for the Students' Union to follow when engaging with Aboriginal students and student groups.

### **The Students' Union shall explore the possibility of developing collaborative programming with Aboriginal community partners and student groups.**

Due to the increasing importance of reconciliation within the past 10 years, the Students' Union has the opportunity to connect with Aboriginal groups – within and outside the University – to co-host events or programs. Such opportunities are a great way for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students to come together and create spaces for dialogue and learning.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to reach out to Aboriginal groups, both internal and external to the University, in the hopes of co-developing programming/events. Such collaborative programming or events must be determined and decided together.

### **The Students' Union shall increase its level of programing targeted towards Aboriginal students, working especially with Faculty Associations whose faculties create an isolating experience for Aboriginal students.**

According to the Aboriginal Student Success Survey:

*For some Aboriginal students, being inadequately represented on their campus or in their program can be a very isolating feeling [...] The minority of students who do not feel they are in a culturally supportive environment emphasized their sense of isolation, especially if they are the only Aboriginal student in their faculty, department, or even a course.*

Throughout its engagement with students, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee has come to recognize the role isolation within one's faculty can play on one's health and completion of a University program. Specifically, faculties without a large Aboriginal presence or Aboriginal-specific student group – such as the Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Science, and Campus Saint-Jean – can become isolating for Aboriginal students.



The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to work with Faculty Associations and Aboriginal student groups to create programming that is faculty- and Aboriginal-specific.

**The Students' Union shall increase the prevalence of Aboriginal art within its collection. Moreover, a mural, done by an Aboriginal artist(s), should be erected in SUB depicting the treaty relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples in Treaty 6.**

Call to Action #83 of the TRC states:

*We call upon the Canada Council for the Arts to establish, as a funding priority, a strategy for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to undertake collaborative projects and produce works that contribute to the reconciliation process.*

Although not specific to the Students' Union, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee recognizes the importance such collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists can make towards reconciliation. At the September 27, 2018 ARRC Town Hall, participants were excited to see this recommendation realized and believed in its importance.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to increase the number of Aboriginal art pieces within its art collection. Moreover, the Committee calls on the Students' Union to hire artists to erect a mural within the Students' Union Building that depicts the Treaty-making process and relationship.

**The Students' Union shall raise awareness, through public discourse and events, of positive Aboriginal student experiences.**

It is important for all students to have positive role models who they can aspire to be. Oftentimes, the media portrays Aboriginal Peoples and issues in a negative light, rarely portraying positive stories.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to increase diversity in its front-facing advertising to better represent the wide variety of students at the University of Alberta. In regards to Aboriginal students, the Students' Union shall advertise the experiences of Aboriginal students and include Aboriginal representation in its outward media. Any such campaign done by the Students' Union must be done at the approval of the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee.



**The Students' Union shall make an informal agreement, via proclamation, with Aboriginal students outlining the Students' Union promise to represent them.**

Under the Post-Secondary Learning Act, the Students' Union is obligated to represent all undergraduate students. However, in recent years, Aboriginal students and student issues have been underrepresented.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to make an informal agreement with Aboriginal students outlining how they will be represented. Such an agreement, although non-binding, represents a symbolic gesture that will aid the Students' Union in its reconciliatory efforts.

**The Students' Union shall, in collaboration with Aboriginal student groups and the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee, maintain a unified Acknowledgement of Traditional Territory that will be universally used throughout the Students' Union.**

The importance of acknowledging the traditional and ongoing territory of Aboriginal Peoples who land on which we sit cannot be understated. Land itself is not just a space, but a cornucopia of Aboriginal histories, cultures, relationships, and traditions. As stated by the Laurier Students' Public Interest Research Group (LSPIRG):

*To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory you reside on, and a way of honouring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. It is important to understand the long standing history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history. Land acknowledgements do not exist in a past tense, or historical context: colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation. It is also worth noting that acknowledging the land is Indigenous protocol.*

Recognizing the importance of territory acknowledgements, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to continuously develop a unified territory acknowledgement within its organization. Such an acknowledgement should be a collaborative project by the Students' Union, the Council Administration Committee, and the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee.



**The Students' Union shall create an Aboriginal Awareness Week, modelled after the event of the same name at the University of Calgary.**

Currently, the University of Calgary hosts an Aboriginal Awareness Week, which is "an annual student-led showcase of Indigenous culture that promotes teachings, collaboration, and sharing of knowledge, and celebrates Canadian Indigeneity." Throughout its engagement with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee has come to realize the important role public education and discourse play in reconciliation and increased understanding.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to collaboratively host an Aboriginal Awareness Week, modeled after the event at the University of Calgary. The focus of such an event should be bringing students together to learn more about Aboriginal Peoples in Canada.

**The Students' Union shall extend an invitation to Aboriginal stakeholders to any meeting in which Aboriginal students are discussed. At a minimum, the chair of the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee must be present at any meeting in which Aboriginal students are discussed.**

As part of its mandate, the Students' Union – and particularly members of the Executive Committee – meets regularly with the University to discuss issues pertaining to Aboriginal students. Unfortunately, however, there has yet to be any member of the Executive Committee who self-identifies as Aboriginal. Moreover, communication between the Students' Union Executive and Aboriginal students is sometimes lacking, leaving students in the dark as to how their Students' Union is advocating for them.

To promote the streamlining of information to Aboriginal students, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to invite Aboriginal stakeholders from around the University of Alberta to participate in meetings where Aboriginal issues are discussed. At minimum, an invitation to such meetings must be given to the chair of the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee.

**The Students' Union shall create a policy surrounding smudging in Students' Union buildings.**

Currently, the University of Alberta has a set of ceremonial (smudging) guidelines that sets out the parameters for smudging at the University of Alberta. However, as the Students' Union Building is operated by the Students' Union, it is not covered by these guidelines.



The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to create guidelines around smudging in the Students' Union Building. Such a policy should be explanatory in nature and inform students about where to smudge in the building and the process of booking them.

### **The Students' Union shall collaborate with Aboriginal elders on all relevant matters.**

Within Aboriginal communities, it is the elders who hold the knowledge and wisdom of the generations. No two elders are alike and each holds distinct knowledges and teachings that enrich the lives of people who listen.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to collaborate with elders and traditional knowledge keepers on all matters deemed relevant by the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee.

### **The Students' Union shall conduct comprehensive research regarding the role that race, ethnicity, and Aboriginality play in involvement and leadership in student governance at the University of Alberta.**

Upon the completion of such research, the Students' Union shall create a STRIDE-like program specifically targeting people of colour and Aboriginal undergraduate students at the University of Alberta.

In September 2017, the Students' Union released the report "*Identity Matters! A Study of Undergraduate Involvement and Leadership in Student Governance at UAlberta.*" The purpose of the study was to take an intersectional approach, with an emphasis on gender, in order to identify barriers to undergraduate involvement in student governance.

Although the study included aspects of race and ethnicity in its study, its main focus was on gender identity. As a result, issues of race, ethnicity, and Aboriginality were secondary in the study.

In reviewing the literature on the role race and ethnicity play in people's involvement in politics, the Committee believes it pertinent for the Students' Union to undertake a comparable study on the roles of race, ethnicity, and Aboriginality.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to undertake a study on the role race, ethnicity, and Aboriginality play in leadership and student governance at the University of Alberta. Moreover, the Committee calls on the Students' Union to create a leadership program, similar to Stride, that focuses on fostering leadership among Black students, Aboriginal students, and people of colour at the University of Alberta.



## STUDENTS' COUNCIL

**Students' Council shall create a task force to delve into the structure of Students' Council representation. This task force should be delegated the authority to review the current model of Students' Council – in relations to Council and student feedback, as well as other university models – and make recommendations on it.**

The purpose of such a task force would be to delve into issues of marginalization among certain cohorts of students, as well as looking into the feasibility of changing Students' Council's structure to allow for an Aboriginal Student Councillor (this point is not just limited to an Aboriginal Student Councillor, but could be broadened to include an International Student Councillor, etc.)

Currently, representation on Students' Council is based on representation by faculty. As a result, faculties are given a certain number of Councillors (minimum of one, with additional Council seats per 999 undergraduate students). However, this is not the only governance model used by Students' Unions across Canada. For example, the University of Saskatchewan has both faculty-specific and representational (i.e., Aboriginal student Councillor, LGBTQ2S Councillor, etc.) council seats.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls Students' Council to create a task force that will look into other governance models, with specific emphasis being placed on diverse student representation.

**The Students' Union shall increase its role/presence in events involving orientation and/or events between the University of Alberta and Aboriginal groups. These include the TAWOW event (orientation provided by First Peoples' House), education events to different First Nations communities, etc.**

At the University of Alberta, Aboriginal-specific events such as TAWOW garner the most attendance of Aboriginal undergraduate students. In order to better reach out to Aboriginal students, Students' Council must seek out such engagement opportunities.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on Students' Council – specifically, the Council Administration Committee – to specify TAWOW as a yearly Students' Council engagement event to which it participates.

**The Students' Union shall expand the current Truth and Reconciliation Commission Political Policy to include issues outside the TRC's Calls to Action, as well as set targeted goals on the implementation of the TRC.**

Although comprehensive, the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is tailored to Canada as a whole. It is important that any political



policy dealing with Aboriginal students is not constrained by such generalizations. Moreover, to ensure that progress is being made, any such political policy must include targeted measures, so as to inform students about what is being done.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on Students' Council – specifically, Bylaw Committee – to create a new political policy titled “Aboriginal Students and Reconciliation.” Such a political policy must mention the TRC’s Calls to Action.

**The Council Administration Committee should strike a language translation task force, similar to the 2016-2017 French Bylaw translation task force, to translate Bylaw 100 into Cree.**

The University of Alberta Students' Union sits on the traditional lands of the Papaschase Cree in Treaty 6 territory. Therefore, it is important that Students' Council acknowledge and respect the language of the Papaschase Cree (i.e., Plains Cree). As Bylaw 100 is the premier piece of legislation regarding Students' Union, translating it into Plains Cree can be viewed as a step in the right direction.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls the Council Administration Committee to create a Plains Cree Language Task Force to translate Bylaw 100 into Cree. Any changes to the English version of Bylaw 100 should also be reflected in the Plains Cree translation.

**The Students' Union shall mandate that a KAIROS Blanket Exercise be an official, recurring part of Students' Council onboarding training. Moreover, a KAIROS Blanket Exercise should also be performed after by-elections.**

As stated by KAIROS Canada, a blanket exercise is “a unique, participatory history lesson – developed in collaboration with Indigenous Elders, knowledge keepers and educators – that fosters truth, understanding, respect and reconciliation among Indigenous and non-Aboriginal peoples.” Developed as a response to the Report of the Royal Commission on Indigenous Peoples (1996), the blanket exercise “covers more than 500 years [of history] in a 90-minute experiential workshop that aims to foster understanding about our shared history as Indigenous and non-Aboriginal peoples.”

For the first time, Students' Council participated in a blanket exercise at the beginning of the current Council term on the request of the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee. Due in part to the positive feedback received from Councillors, the Committee believes there is value in mandating a blanket exercise as part of regular Students' Council training.

Similarly, the Committee believes there is value in having a blanket exercise at the Council of Faculty Associations (COFA). COFA is a student governance body that



is made up of Faculty Associations, which act for and in behalf of the constituents in their faculty. As Faculty Associations can play a major role in the academic and extracurricular lives of undergraduate students (e.g., hosting events, advocating for students, collaborating with other groups, etc.), the Committee believes it is pertinent for Faculty Association executives to undertake a blanket exercise as a first step in understanding their Aboriginal constituents.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to mandate that Students' Council participate in a blanket exercise yearly. Specifically, the Committee mandates that the Council Administration Committee review and make changes to sections 19 and 20 of Students' Council Standing Orders to ensure the mandatory participation in the exercise. Moreover, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee request that the Vice President Academic, in their role as chair of COSA, provide Faculty Associations, Department Associations, and Residence Associations the opportunity to participate in a blanket exercise.

**The Students' Union shall create two budget lines for Students' Council to support Aboriginal initiatives. One budget line shall be added to the Council Administration Committee, while the other will be housed under the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee.**

#### **ARRC Budget**

- Honorariums for Elders
- Ceremonial materials

#### **CAC Budget**

- Honorariums for Elders
- Ceremonial materials
- TAWOW
- Aboriginal Advocacy Town Hall

Throughout the 2018/2019 year, Students' Council has begun to implement Aboriginal practices and teachings within its meetings. Specifically, this year saw Students' Council legislate the inclusion of a smudging ceremony prior to every meeting, as well as participate in a Council-wide talking circle facilitated by knowledge keeper Cheryl Makokis.

Upon hearing positive feedback from the majority of Students' Council, the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee is confident that the continued inclusion of ceremony will have constructive outcomes. In order to ensure the continued viability of such practices into the future, the Committee believes that the creation of two separate budgets – one for the Aboriginal Relations and



Reconciliation Committee and one for the Council Administration Committee – will ensure that both Students’ Council and the Committee will have ongoing access to cultural/ceremonial initiatives and the knowledge of elders.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students’ Union to create two separate budget lines for Students’ Council to support Aboriginal Initiatives. The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee is to have its own budget specific to its internal affairs, while the Council Administration Committee is to oversee the second budget on behalf of Students’ Council.

### **The Students’ Union shall edit its Acknowledgement of Traditional Territories to recognize that the University of Alberta is situated on unlawfully stolen and unceded Papaschase Cree territory.**

In August of 1877, the Papaschase Band signed an adhesion to Treaty 6 and received more than 60 square kilometres of reserve land in what is now southeast Edmonton. According to Chief Calvin Bruneau, Papaschase chief, the Papaschase Cree occupied what is now the Rosedale Flats and River Valley area prior to the signing of treaty.

Founding the Edmonton area’s first newspaper in 1880, Frank Oliver utilized the Edmonton Bulletin to enforce a negative and racialized narrative of the Papaschase. As published in the Bulletin, Oliver writes:

*It is well known that an Indian reserve located near a town is a cause of trouble and general demoralization to both whites and Indians [...]. Now is the time for the Government to declare the Reserve open and show whether this country is to be run in the interests of settlers or the Indian.*

The continued “us vs. them” narrative espoused by the Edmonton Bulletin was one factor that led to the eventual illegal surrender of the Papaschase Reserve in 1894.

According to Chief Bruneau, recognition of the Papaschase Cree is of central importance to not only the band, but to the true history of the City of Edmonton.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students’ Union – and particularly Students’ Council – to edit the Acknowledgement of Traditional Territories to recognize the historic and contemporary realities of the Papaschase Cree. Specifically, the edits must acknowledge that the University of Alberta and the Students’ Union are situated on unlawfully stolen and unceded Papaschase Cree territory.



### **The Students' Union shall amend its Acknowledgement of Traditional Territories to reflect the traditional names of the Nations mentioned in the acknowledgement.**

Today, Canada's first peoples go by a number of names: "Aboriginal," "Indigenous," "First Nation," "Inuit," "Métis," to name a few. What these all have in common is that they are names created by non-Aboriginal people and settler governments to categorize/identify Aboriginal Peoples.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on the Students' Union to amend its Acknowledgement of Traditional Territories to reflect traditional names, used by the Nations, mentioned in the acknowledgement.

### **Students' Council shall, in collaboration with the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee, create a Territory Acknowledgement Guide to help inform committees of the importance of the acknowledgement.**

- Committees of Students' Council are encouraged to speak the Territory Acknowledgement at the opening of every meeting.

Although acknowledging traditional territory is a good first step in showing recognition and respect to Aboriginal Peoples, such statements often lack the context necessary to fully understand them. The inclusion of such context would make the Acknowledgement of Traditional Territories too long to be read out at every Students' Council meeting and would change the nature of the acknowledgement.

Upon hearing from both Councillors and undergraduate students, the Committee sees value in creating a guide for the Acknowledgement of Traditional Territories. Such a guide would be educational in nature and allow people to better understand the Acknowledgement and its intent.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on Students' Council to create a Territory Acknowledgement Guide to help Council and its committees better understand the acknowledgement. Specifically, such a guide should contextualize the Territory Acknowledgement and be specific to the territory on which the Students' Union resides.

### **Students' Council shall amend Bylaw 1500 so as to broaden the mandate of DIE Board to include reference/abstract questions and allow the Board to provide advisory opinions (DIE Board Ruling 2017-01).**

In Canada, legislative bodies (such as provincial legislatures and the federal government) can ask the courts 'reference questions.' According to the Parliament of Canada, reference questions, "allow for the determination of important legal questions, including those concerning the scope of Parliament's legislative



authority and the constitutionality of proposed legislation, absent a traditional legal dispute.” Put another way, the Students’ Union Discipline, Interpretation, and Enforcement (DIE) Board classifies a reference question (or ‘abstract review’) as, “a submission by either the Federal or a provincial government to the Supreme Court of Canada or appellate court, asking for an advisory opinion on a major legal issue, usually involving the constitutionality (legality) of legislation, including proposed legislation.”

In its judicial decision in *Sunday v. Students’ Union (SU) Council*, the DIE Board references a number of advantages to allowing a students’ union judiciary to comment on proposed legislation. Moreover, the DIE Board stated that:

*If Students’ Union Council intends for DIE Board to be able to provide opinions on the hypothetical results of motions which are not yet legislation, then Bylaw 1500 would have to be amended and such specific functions be explicitly added to section 2 Page 2 of 3 “Mandate” and section 3 “Scope of Cases”.*

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on Students’ Council to amend Bylaw 1500 to allow DIE Board to provide advisory opinions on reference/abstract questions.

### **The Students’ Council shall create a Students who Parent Policy.**

- The policy will specifically reference the disproportionate rate of Aboriginal students who parent compared to domestic and international students who parents.

According to the Students’ Union’s 2017 Student Survey, Aboriginal students are nearly four times more likely to be a student who parent than non-Aboriginal students. As Aboriginal students already face barriers to enrolment, Aboriginal students with children face even more.

The purpose of a political policy is to “direct the Executive Committee in their advocacy efforts. They set out the formal position of the Students’ Union on the political issues of the day.” The members of the Executive Committee – the President and Vice Presidents – are the main actors of the Students’ Union in regard to external advocacy. Political policies set out how and for what the Executive Committee advocates.

The Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee calls on Students’ Council to create a ‘Students who Parent’ political policy. Specifically, emphasis should be placed in the political policy on the disproportional rates of Aboriginal students who parent.

