Indigenization Strategy: Policies and Procedures Working Group
Chair: Dr. Doug Peers
Draft Recommendations

Our objective has been to ensure our indigenization plan can count upon having the appropriate procedures, practices, and policies in place. That way we can best ensure the success of the University of Waterloo Indigenization strategy, and to enable us to act in an effective and timely manner upon specific recommendations pertaining, for example, to curriculum, research, student life, community engagement, and faculty and staff recruitment and retention. We need to be confident that the policies and procedures we have at hand are up to the tasks that lay ahead, and that they enjoy the respect and support of the wider community. We recommend that the University of Waterloo and its partners, namely the affiliated and federated colleges and university, the Federation of Students, Graduate Students Association, Staff Association, and the Faculty Association, commit to examining current and proposed policies and procedures through an Indigenization lens. This will best position us to deliver on the Indigenization strategy as it develops and unfolds. We need to be mindful of the intended as well the potentially unintended consequences of our policies and procedures, and consider our recommendations in light of current and future generations of students, staff, and scholars.

The Policies and Procedures Working Group has been working in collaborative and iterative manner, looking in large part to the other working groups to identify possible Indigenization initiatives. These then have been reviewed with an eye to ensuring that their efforts can best be supported either through existing policies and procedures, or by suggesting that new ones be developed following consultation with relevant groups on campus as well as relevant local Indigenous groups. Our committee is committed to ensuring that we respect UW practice and custom, particularly with respect to decision-making, most notably the respective authority of Departmental and Faculty-level Councils and Senate as well as our partner’s decision-making bodies. We have also been seeking to learn from other universities. Consequently, our objectives included reviewing best practices from a selection of Canadian universities engaged in similar goals of Indigenization; identifying expert Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners inside and outside academe with whom we can share insights and experiences; undertaking a preliminary inventory of our current policies and guidelines; and examining suggestions from the other working groups in the context of current policies and procedures.

Preamble

Any Indigenization plan for the University of Waterloo must at the outset serve three critical functions. Firstly, it must meet the needs of Indigenous students, staff, and faculty; creating and fostering an environment through which their educational, employment, and scholarly aspirations can be best met. Secondly, an Indigenization plan (or however it is labeled) must clearly set forth authority and accountability, and do so in a manner that enjoys widespread support and respect across all communities of
the campus. Thirdly, we need to recognize that reconciliation is a two-way street. We must acknowledge not only the damage that has been done, but also how much we can all benefit from a deepened appreciation of Indigenous knowledge. The successful development and implementation of any plan will require further discussion and eventually consensus as to what is meant by ‘Indigenization’ (or whatever term we chose to use), and who is involved, and how. To that end, those who are drafting the plan may wish to frame the plan with reference to specific recommendations of the TRC. Universities Canada has provided such a mapping.

1. Ensure institutional commitment at every level to develop opportunities for Indigenous students.
2. Be student-centered: focus on the learners, learning outcomes and learning abilities, and create opportunities that promote student success.
3. Recognize the importance of Indigenization of curricula through responsive academic programming, support programs, orientations, and pedagogies.
4. Recognize the importance of Indigenous education leadership through representation at the governance level and within faculty, professional and administrative staff.
5. Continue to build welcoming and respectful learning environments on campuses through the implementation of academic programs, services, support mechanisms, and spaces dedicated to Indigenous students.
6. Continue to develop resources, spaces and approaches that promote dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.
7. Continue to develop accessible learning environments off-campus.
8. Recognize the value of promoting partnerships among educational and local Indigenous communities and continue to maintain a collaborative and consultative process on the specific needs of Indigenous students.
9. Build on successful experiences and initiatives already in place at universities across the country to share and learn from promising practices, while recognizing the differences in jurisdictional and institutional mission.
10. Recognize the importance of sharing information within the institution, and beyond, to inform current and prospective Indigenous students of the array of services, programs and supports available to them on campus.
11. Recognize the importance of providing greater exposure and knowledge for non-Indigenous students on the realities, histories, cultures and beliefs of Indigenous people in Canada.
12. Recognize the importance of fostering intercultural engagement among Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, faculty and staff.
13. Recognize the role of institutions in creating an enabling and supportive environment for a successful and high quality K-12 experience for Aboriginal youth.
14. Raise awareness within institutions about the importance of facilitating access and success for Indigenous students on campus.
15. Raise awareness among government partners and stakeholders of these commitments and the importance of investing in sustainable initiatives that advance higher education opportunities for Indigenous youth.
16. Raise awareness in public discourse of positive Indigenous students’ experience in university and their contributions to Canadian society.
17. Develop partnerships with the private sector to foster opportunities for Indigenous people.
18. Continue to listen to and collaborate with Indigenous communities.

Recommendations:

I
We need to ensure indigenous perspectives and participations are applied across and within each of the six Faculties, three affiliated Colleges and federated university which comprise the University of Waterloo. We recognize that our internal capacity is limited. In addition, we acknowledge Indigenous scholars, professionals, knowledge keepers, and all around expertise that are eager to contribute to supporting our work.

Recommendation 1. Engage Indigenous post-secondary leadership, as well as experts from elementary and secondary schools, in the development of any Indigenization Plan.

Rationale:
The Indigenous population has rallied enthusiastically to opportunities to support the Calls to Action set out by the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada. These calls clearly state that Indigenous representation needs to be involved within all sectors including post-secondary education. We stand to benefit from such engagement. Understanding the complexity that is involved in bridging two distinct value systems is a fine example of what innovation looks like. With our Indigenization strategy, an essential requirement involves a process of transformation. Transformation involves respecting and incorporating indigenous ways of knowing. Such a transformation takes into consideration all perspectives, capacities, solutions and accepts there will be times of reflection.

II
University of Waterloo has committed to being a fully inclusive institution by addressing underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in Canada. We acknowledge that the university is lacking Indigenous representation across all levels of governance, facilities, staff, and students.

Recommendation 2. Examine procedures and standards to remove barriers and create opportunities to ensure greater participation by and for Indigenous persons within the wider university.
Rationale:
We need to review our current policies and procedures to ensure that we create an environment that is much more conducive to the active participation of Indigenous persons in the life of the university. Moreover, and in keeping with TRC #65, we need to work with Indigenous peoples and other partners to research and understand better the wider cultural, societal, political, and economic structures and discourses which have served to marginalize Indigenous persons.

III
Reconciliation is the process of rebuilding trust and forging new connections in the face of a broken relationship. In the process of rebuilding trust, confidence in the sincerity between both parties needs to be established. There needs to be a willingness to explore change. Coupling sincerity and acceptance of differences will create meaningful opportunities to rekindle relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Recommendation 3. Consider implementing overarching “institutional guidelines” which could be part of the suite of guidelines hosted on the Secretariat’s website. Guidelines offer increased flexibility than an “institutional policy” and offer a basis that current and future policies can draw from.

Rationale:
Policies as they currently function at the University of Waterloo can be or become very rigid, and do not admit of easy or quick modification. Given that Indigenization and reconciliation are long-term commitments and that we will likely be adopting an iterative approach combining experimentation and consultation, fixed policies would likely become very constraining. Guidelines arising organically from mutual consultation would create more flexibility and encourages greater trust.

IV
As noted in the recommendations from the TRC, it is critical that those tasked with and taking up the objectives of Indigenization are provided with the opportunity to understand both the origins of the current situation and the ways and means of moving ahead. As stated in TRC #57: We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism. Similar injunctions are found in TRC #92 iii: We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources. This would include, but not be limited to, the following: […] Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of
Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

**Recommendation 4. Explore ways to provide greater educational and professional development opportunities, anchored in the report and recommendations for the TRC, for all staff and faculty members**

**Rationale:**
Initiatives work and can only fully succeed as part of a congruent system, not as silos. Key initiatives include creating guidelines and training for staff and faculty members (including intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism); provide opportunities for staff and faculty members to network both on a provincial and on a national level; coordinating other training opportunities with Organizational & Human Development (OHD) and FAUW as they both provide training. Provide clear and frequent updates to the wider community as to the objectives and the impact of Indigenization efforts; ensure that this understood to be a core commitment cutting through all the principal leadership bodies in the organization.

V
Recognizing the need to balance the decentralized nature of the University, notably the six Faculties, three affiliated Colleges and a federated University with a common commitment to Indigenization, it is important to ensure that there is a mutually-recognized common space and a means to coordinate the University’s commitments.

**Recommendation 5. Create a new space such as an Office of Indigenous Initiatives that will serve as a hub or unit to meet the university’s Indigenous needs and activities and collaborate with Indigenous community partnerships.**

**Rationale:**
This physical place and associated personnel would signal clearly and forcefully the university’s commitment. Indigenization of the university without physical commitment to permanent Indigenous space would likely lead to a weaker and less coherent message. Moreover, failure to create such a space that has dedicated staff may suggest superficial changes rather than substantive change. (i.e. those that don’t require much dollar commitment); but not significant institutional change. This physical place and associated personnel would signal clearly and forcefully the university’s commitment.

VI
The life experience of First Nations Metis and Inuit (FNMI) students can differ greatly from that of experienced by typical Canadian students and as such there would be widely varied interaction expectations and norms. We must be ready to reflect upon these and respond in culturally-sensitive and proactive ways to help them succeed.

**Recommendation 6. Review current policies and consider introducing alternatives that are better adapted to meeting the lived experiences and values**
of FNMI students (e.g., UW policies 70, 71 & 72). For example, we could consider alternative dispute resolution practices.

Rationale:
Many of our current policies and practices have been designed with the values and experiences of Euro-American students in mind, and reflect the practices of settler society. Alternative measures exist within FNMI communities – e.g. different methods of dispute resolution – and their use should be considered as part of our efforts to make universities more welcoming and also more comprehensible to FNMI persons and communities,

VII
Indigenous learning traditions and methods predate the onset of colonial rule and are deeply embedded in cultural memory. The use of elders and Indigenous learning has true value and a long history within FNMI communities. The university would benefit from engaging with Indigenous knowledge and establishing links with elders.

Recommendation 7. Review employment practices and policies governing research and teaching partnerships so as to remove barriers to engaging Elders or Knowledge Keepers in teaching and scholarship

Rationale:
It is important to encourage greater engagement with Indigenous knowledge and open up more opportunities to work with elders. This way we will ensure that Indigenous knowledge is seen to be valued in principle as well as in practice, and that holders of that knowledge have a respected place within the university.

VIII
The University of Waterloo has made clear its commitment to advancing Indigenous initiatives on campus. However, current university policies can inadvertently act as a barrier to Indigenous practices/knowledge. For example, ceremonial smudging or payments to elders invited to provide blessings have come into conflict with UW policies. It is essential that we identify and remove these types of barriers to ensure that Indigenization efforts can move forward.

Recommendation 8. Review existing policies to identify and remove barriers to the use of Indigenous practices/knowledge in teaching and scholarship

Rationale:
A thorough review of existing policies, employing an Indigenous lens, is necessary to identify barriers to Indigenous practices/knowledge, and determine reasonable, appropriate revisions that acknowledge diverse ways of knowing and doing. The intent is to ensure Indigenous faculty, staff, and student values are reflected within the very
foundation of university policy, as a first step to creating a welcoming and supportive environment for all members of the university community.

IX
Recognizing that the policies and practices of the University of Waterloo are the product of a settler society, and inevitably the site of colonialism, it is fundamental to the success of an Indigenous/Indigenization strategy that policies and procedures themselves be opened to a collaborative or consultative process.

Recommendation 9. Review policies and practices for openings where we could embed more opportunities for consultative approaches, which is critical when seeking to bridge two very distinct systems. Moreover, ensure that such consultations are designed to be ongoing and truly collaborative

Rationale:
This builds on recommendation 3 that “the university is lacking Indigenous representation across all levels of governance” and in Recommendation 4 that “we will be finding our way through experimentation grounded in consultation.” That policy and procedure currently can work against change, when fundamental change is sought, is rationale for a policy and procedure review.

X
Inherent in UW’s indigenous strategy is the need for continuous and collaborative communication between and among all university community members, at all levels of the institution and in the wider communities beyond its doors, particularly Indigenous communities. Clarity in this communication is fundamental and is only possible if there is broad-based acceptance of a common vocabulary. Therefore:

Recommendation 10. Ensure that an iterative glossary is created. This would for example clarification of the definition of “Indigenous”, what we mean by consensus and consultation, as well as what we understand by “Expert” or “Knowledge Keeper”. The terminology should be comprehensive and accessible to all members of our community.

Rationale:
Efforts to move forward to an Indigenized University requires timely and effective communication. As Recommendation #4 acknowledges; [it] requires on going partnerships to articulate best practices (#11); requires an advisory committee with full Indigenous representation and leadership (#14); and may require public facing language expressing UW’s commitment to Indigenous strategy (#16). It is imperative that all have clarity around the use of language, the meaning of terms, and the understandings of expertise to enable trust-filled communication for the ongoing collaborative process of change to an Indigenized university community. As such, an iterative glossary will allow community members and partners within UW as well as
within the wider settler and Indigenous communities to communicate effectively and comprehensibly.

XI
In order for any Indigenization plan to be successful, it much align effectively with other university planning and strategic documents. For example, we must think of what we mean by inclusivity with respect to prospective Indigenous students given our entry requirements and expectations.

**Recommendation 11. Ensure that we align Indigenization with other values, principles, and objectives of the University of Waterloo.**

Rationale:
Adding Indigenization (if this is the correct term) as a core value of the University of Waterloo suggests a certain prioritization. In order for it to be successful, we need to ensure that it does not conflict with or is undermined by other university strategies and pursuits. It will be important to ensure that those working on the next Strategic Plan of the university ensure that they are informed by our Indigenization plan and associated efforts (or whatever it is known as).

XII
There needs to be clear accountability within the institution to ensure responsibility for moving the Indigenization strategy (ies) forward and that consultation and decision-making is done transparently and effectively.

**Recommendation 12. Establish an Indigenous advisory committee – which draws both upon University representatives and community members, and which has a clear mandate.**

Rationale:
In relation to recommendation #5, an Indigenous Advisory Committee, which would report into a person (see recommendation #17) who is ultimately accountable for carrying the leadership of the Indigenization strategy(ies).

XIII
A successful Indigenization plan for the University will require secure, sustained, and central funding commitments. Therefore:

**Recommendation 13. Ensure sustainable and central funding for indigenization as a means of both effecting change and demonstrating the university’s commitment.**

Rationale:
Only funding from the centre is capable of sustaining Indigenization work across the six Faculties and four affiliated and federated institutions, and ensuring that we are working towards common goals and with common principles. Funding from the centre further signals that UW’s highest level of leadership drives and supports Indigenization work – an outward facing message absolutely key to the perceived legitimacy of UW’s Indigenous strategy to internal and external stakeholders alike. More than symbolic, central funding is the fundamental expression of a deep commitment to ensuring that the Calls to Action of the TRC are met at UW.

XIV
There needs to be clear accountability within the institution to ensure that responsibility for moving the Indigenization strategy(ies) forward is clearly identified and that efficacy and transparency in consultation and decision-making has been facilitated.

Recommendation 14. Establish a clear locus of authority/leadership for Indigenization and ensure that this office has the authority, resources, and the legitimacy to engage with the diverse communities on campus

Rationale:
In relation to recommendations #5 and 16, we recommend the creation of a senior officer of Indigenous heritage that would oversee and lead the Indigenization strategy(ies). Ideally this person would report directly either to the President or the Provost, and would have a seat on Executive Council. This person would be the obvious choice to oversee the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and chair the Indigenous Advisory Committee (or whatever these bodies are named).