

Indigenous Advisory Circle

Minutes of the Meeting of June 2022

1:00 pm by Zoom

Present: Brad Regehr, Brenda Simpson, Jean Becker, Jaydum Hunt, Rick Myers

1. Opening

Brenda opened the meeting at 1:10 with words of welcome

2. Agenda

The agenda was approved as circulated.

3. Principal's Report

Rick reported on three items.

- The College has entered a new stage in its search for a Director for the WISC. Previously, we have looked for someone like the previous Director who could both manage the WISC and participate in the delivery of our Indigenous Studies academic programming. While we have come close on a couple of occasions, we have not managed to fill the position. Going forward, we hope to improve our prospects by separating the academic component out from the position. We will be interviewing three candidates in the next month.
- As part of its strategy for delivering the Indigenous Entrepreneurship program, the College is creating *The Trading Post*, an Indigenous “twin” to *GreenHouse*. *The Trading Post* will be responsible for delivery the experiential courses in the Indigenous Entrepreneurship program and will ultimately serve as an incubator for Indigenous students who have a venture or project they would like to launch. As far as we know, this will be the first Indigenous incubator on a Canadian university campus.
- It is almost certain that the Board of the College will be changing the name of the institution to *United College* at its meeting this Thursday. The change has already been approved in principle. The new name will both salute our founders in the United Church but at the same time provide a new secular identity going forward grounded in the value of “uniting.”

4. Report of the Interim Director

The report was circulated ahead of time. Jaydum focused her oral remarks on some of the changes made to the infrastructure in the Centre.

Jaydum raised a question about whether the IAC should be more involved in providing direction to the WISC and its Director.

Jean suggested that if you ask an Advisory Circle to become involved in operational matters, you open the door to conflict of interest.

Rick suggested that sometimes a chief executive officer who reports to a Board finds it helpful to develop a good personal relationship with the chair of the Board and to consult informally with the chair on a regular basis.

It was also noted that Jean's office would be an excellent source of Indigenous advice and guidance for the Director.

Jaydum also asked about the development of a strategic plan for the WISC. It was agreed that the new Director should work with WISC staff and students (and the Principal) to develop a draft strategic plan and then bring the draft to the IAC for endorsement.

5. Verification of Indigenous Identity in Hirings

Jean reported that UW is working hard to formulate policy and procedures in this area. But the issue is more complex than people realize and no university has yet solved the problem.

On March 9-10, there was a national conference on this matter primarily for Indigenous university leaders. The name for the conference was the Cree word for "Wake Up." The intent was to share suggestions for moving forward.

One of the first questions is how to define "identity." Is the term "identity" problematic? It's not identity that we need to define but citizenship, relationship and kinship. This is encapsulated in the phrase "It's not who you claim to be but who claims you." Going forward, there will definitely be an impetus to move beyond "self-identification" and to insist on vetting policies for hiring.

One recommendation is that Elders be recognized as faculty members to form panels that will take the lead in settling these matters.

There has also been some discussion about what the consequences should be for institutions that hire "pretendians."

Jean noted that this is a bigger problem than people realize. There are organizations selling phony Indigenous identity cards that claim as many as 70,000 members.

There will be another meeting of "Wake Up" in October. Most universities are striking task forces to figure out how to proceed. There's a difficult legal question: to what extent do employers have a right to ask questions about identity as part of a hiring process?

6. Membership

Brenda noted that there are a number of vacancies on the IAC. Members agreed to give thought to potential new members. Thinking about alumni would be advisable.

7. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 3:15 pm.

Minutes by Rick