

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

Teaching, Learning, and Academic Resources Committee of Council

REQUEST FOR DECISION

PRESENTED BY: Jay Wilson, Chair of TLARC

DATE OF MEETING: June 18, 2015

SUBJECT: Language for Acknowledgment of Indigenous Peoples and Lands

DECISION REQUESTED:

It is recommended:

That Council adopt the following language for use at the start of its meetings, effective September 1, 2015:

As we gather here today, we acknowledge we are on Treaty Six Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nation and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND:

Under the direction of TLARC and its working group, The Office of Aboriginal Engagement has been working in collaboration with the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness to develop consistent language that may be used by speakers at ceremonies and events on campus to acknowledge Indigenous Peoples and Lands. This work has been ongoing since 2014.

Development of thoughtful and consistent language through extensive consultation has been important to for three reasons. First, it is appropriate that acknowledgement of the history and the people of this land be made. Second, while many in our community may seek to acknowledge this place and its people, they may have concerns or fears about how to do so or what to say. Third, wide consultation ensured that the language that is recommended has been approved by the peoples whom it acknowledges. The aim has been to ensure that all Indigenous Peoples feel welcomed to the land, and that no one feels excluded.

CONSULTATION:

In April of 2015, 132 surveys were sent to Indigenous and Non-Indigenous faculty and staff, which included a proposed statement for the acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples and Lands. The intention of sending the survey was for those surveyed to either approve or reject, and/or to offer alternatives or necessary rephrasing/edits to the

statement of acknowledgement. 132 surveys were sent, with a response rate of 40% (53 total responses). To the question, “Are you amenable to using the statement above to follow the protocols of acknowledging Place and Peoples to open important gatherings?” 84.9% responded “yes,” and 15.1% responded “no.”

A preliminary draft was circulated and a survey was conducted with a large number of Indigenous faculty, staff, and students. Data was collected from the circulated survey and the language was redrafted to reflect concerns raised.

Prior to the survey being circulated, the language was discussed extensively by working group of TLARC whose focus is Indigenizing the Curriculum. The larger committee of TLARC provided input on a number of occasions, as did members of the Office of Aboriginal Engagement.

SUMMARY:

TLARC recommends the adoption the proposed language to acknowledge the Indigenous peoples of this land and the relationship that we all share in our sharing this place. By speaking the proposed statement at the start of each session of Council, the importance of that relationship and the history of this place will be highlighted.