

Dawson First Peoples Initiative 2015 Report

Last spring the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its *Calls to Action* http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf, and our new federal government recently affirmed its commitment to meeting all the **TRC** recommendations and investing in First Peoples education. We are very pleased to now share the ways Dawson itself has committed to its First Peoples Initiative, including our Academic Dean's signing of the Colleges and Institutes Canada Indigenous Education Protocol <http://www.collegesinstitutes.ca/policyfocus/indigenous-learners/protocol/>, which outlines principles for supporting Indigenous learners.

Dawson held a powerful **Visioning Session** last spring to directly hear the particular needs, concerns, and suggestions of the Indigenous communities that we serve. This resulted in a set of recommendations for Indigenousizing the college that the First Peoples Initiative has been hard at work to implement. Below is an update on the various activities and plans designed to meet these recommendations. You'll find more details about all of these projects, including the relevant documents, on the Dawson website (see *First Peoples Initiative* under *Projects*) and on the FPI's SharePoint site (through the Dawson portal) in January.

Indigenous Education Council

We are now very grateful to have a Council – which includes Cree, Kanienkehaka (Mohawk), Inuit, and Métis community members – to guide the college in developing programs and services for Indigenous students, as well as ways to raise awareness within the larger Dawson community about First Peoples cultures, traditions, and perspectives.

First Peoples Centre and Coordinator

This past term a temporary Indigenous student gathering and study space was established in Room 2D.0. Efforts continue to find a permanent space for the First Peoples Centre to offer students a warm and welcoming community with academic, cultural, and spiritual support by fall 2016.

We are especially excited about soon having a full-time coordinator; the job is currently posted on the Dawson website, with the position to begin in January.

Student Life

A variety of events this fall included new student orientations, delicious Indigenous lunches, and workshops on beading and medicine pouches with a special smudging ceremony (a traditional cleansing ritual with the smoke of burning herbs). The First Peoples Initiative also participated in Dawson's Multicultural Days. We were thrilled to offer Cree and Mohawk **language** classes on campus, with free spaces reserved for students. These were very popular and will continue in the winter. Thanks to Billi Jo Poirier for organizing all this!

Winter 2016 Events

More cultural and social activities will be organized throughout the coming term, including some for the larger Dawson community. Our **Indigenous Awareness Days** are in the planning stages—you'll see announcements on the Dawson website and around the college closer to the date. And look out for stimulating First Peoples sessions during **Social Science Week** and in **S.P.A.C.E.**! We are all so encouraged by the involvement of other college initiatives with the FPI.

Faculty Development

At Ped Day 2015, faculty and staff were introduced to Indigenous issues in education by Dr. Lindsay Morcom from Queen's University, inspiring many faculty and staff with strategies for decolonizing the college and creating cultural safety in the classroom.

Another workshop on using **Indigenous pedagogy and knowledge** in all disciplines and programs is being planned for January—the tentative date is Friday, January 15, so teachers, keep your calendars and your course outlines open!

A land-based traditions workshop is being planned for the spring.

Curricular Resources

We will soon have a special collection of First Peoples resources in the **library**, and in early January faculty can check out **SharePoint** for curricular and disciplinary resources. We're working on developing a living library as well, so you will know who to invite to your classroom or event to speak on Indigenous subjects. We don't yet have funding to offer honoraria for this, but we're working on it!

And don't forget that we now have a talking stick available to borrow from the library!

First Peoples Course List

We have a growing list of course offerings presenting Indigenous content and perspectives.

Faculty who have plans to Indigenize their courses should let the curriculum committee know—we're currently updating the list for winter registration.

Indigenous Journeys Program

A first-year Tremplin DEC program is being designed to provide Indigenous students with a welcoming, holistic, supportive, and culturally relevant learning environment to develop the academic skills they need to transition to their college program of choice. This innovative pilot program is being developed in collaboration with Indigenous communities and is expected to be offered as of fall 2016. Dawson's Learning Communities initiative is also involved.

French Department

Francesca Roy continues her work with the French Department and Kahnawake's high school to support Indigenous students learning French.

Get involved!

The process of Indigenizing Dawson – making it a place that is welcoming to Indigenous students by working closely with their communities – is just beginning! If you are interested in participating in any of these activities or projects or have other ideas, please contact a member of the FPI Steering Committee. We hope for participation from all programs, departments, and sectors!

Michelle Smith (Steering Committee)
Paddie Hemlock Chiara (Academic Advising)
Billi Jo Poirier (Student Life)
Karla Gruodis (Steering Committee and IEC)
Susan Briscoe (Curriculum Committee)
Francesca Roy (French Department)
Isabelle Carrier (Steering Committee)

Bob Kavanagh (Steering Committee)