

Laotsyá:n

The Messenger (On[^]yote'a:ka')

Enoondaajgaazad (Anishinaabemowin)

Peetaachiimuw (Lūnaapéewak)



Indigenous
Initiatives



Western



On the cover: *Wellness and the Circle of Life*
by Thunder Day (Mike Cywink)

SHE:KOLI, AANII, KOOLAMALSIHMWA, GREETINGS.

Spring is finally upon us, and while the academic year comes to an end, the new season heralds new beginnings. The Office of Indigenous Initiatives is engaged in planning for a range of events and initiatives in the coming months, many of which are leading us in new and positive directions. As you'll see from this edition of *Laotsyá:n*, we are advancing Indigeneity on numerous fronts across campus, and Indigenous people continue to make fulsome contributions to student and academic life at Western. We encourage everyone at the University to engage with us. By sharing Indigenous voices, perspectives and ways of knowing and being with the wider world, we aim to enrich the Western experience and encourage dialogue and understanding among all who are part of the academic enterprise.

Table of Contents

Message from the VP-AVP	4
Eniigaanzijig • Pathfinders	
Term Extended for Artist-in-Residence	6
New Coordinator at Western Affiliates	7
New Indigenous Faculty Joins Western	7
Thsistó:t^' • Lighting the Fire	
Indigenous Learning Space	8
Annual Progress Report	9
Kihtaachiimwiil • Storytelling	
Elder Spotlight	10
Indigenous Voices- <i>Peetooteewiit</i>	12
<i>Biindigen</i>	13
Wampum • News and Events	
Head and Heart New Coordinator	14
Building Reconciliation Forum	15
Indigenous Gonfalon	16
Tsi' Twanakéhle • Community	
Art at Thames Hall	18



As we move into Spring, I am reminded of the importance of staying well by living in balance in all areas of my life, taking only what I need with a grateful and respectful heart, and walking softly to safeguard the needs of future generations.



Message from the VP-AVP (Indigenous Initiatives)

Boozhoo Aanii (Hello) to everyone. It is a true pleasure to send you springtime greetings. This is such a special time of year, as the world wakes from its winter rest and expends a tremendous amount of energy to launch another productive season. The Anishinabek name for April is *Namebine Giizis*—Sucker Moon—in acknowledgement of the sucker fish who gives of itself to sustain life for many others, especially when rich food sources aren't always abundant so early in the year. In the Spring, *Namebine* are ideal for harvest and provide nourishment and healing needed to sustain life.

As we move into Spring, I am reminded of the importance of staying well by living in balance in all areas of my life, taking only what I need with a grateful and respectful heart, and walking softly to safeguard the needs of future generations.

During this time of renewal, let us continue to be mindful of others and—like *Namebine*—do what we can to encourage and support one another, especially during active periods such as the end of the Winter term.

This has been another challenging season for many, but we can draw inspiration from the natural world by living in harmony and recognizing that all seasons (and storms in life) eventually pass. We can look forward with hope to the next season that is always right around the corner, and prepare for all the opportunities it brings.

May this Springtime greeting find you well and optimistic for a beautiful, productive, and new season ahead.

All my relations (acknowledging oneness and harmony for all),

Christy R. Bressette
(Neta Noo-Ke Kwe – Hard Working Woman)

TERM EXTENDED FOR WESTERN'S FIRST INDIGENOUS ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

In the fall of 2021, Kelly Greene, Haudenosaunee from the Six Nations Reserve in Ohsweken, Ontario, became the University's first Indigenous artist-in-residence. Kelly has been very busy since then, and we're delighted to announce that her term has been extended to May 2023.

Over the past several months, Kelly has given artist presentations for four Visual Arts courses, as well as a Zoom presentation for Western's International Women's Day Mini Speaker Series, and she will deliver another presentation in May at the **N'Amerind Friendship Centre**.

She is also continuing to learn Kanyen'kéha, the Mohawk language, and plans to learn cornhusk twining, a Haudenosaunee art form traditionally performed by women. These educational initiatives will help inform her creation of artworks, which has been ongoing through her tenure at Western. She works on multiple pieces simultaneously, and recently submitted a painting for the annual UPwith ART fundraiser in support of the Unity Project, an organization fighting to relieve homelessness in London. While painting features prominently in her work, Kelly also devotes herself to other media, and is at present executing sculptures and interactive installations for completion in the next few months.

This month she has a solo exhibit at **Artlab, Western's visual art gallery**, which will showcase work she completed during and since her attending Western as a student. The exhibit will run until the middle of May, so readers of this newsletter can enjoy her art over



Humanity's Vast Responsibility by Kelly Greene

the next few weeks. She also helped to coordinate a community event on April 7 showcasing the Eagle Flight Singers delivering a music and dance performance at Artlab.

Another exhibit is planned for June: Woodland Cultural Centre's "Dejidwaya'do:weht (We are Thinking of it Again): The Mush Hole Project 2.0." The original "Mush Hole Project" was on display in September 2016 for only a weekend before the restoration began of the Mohawk Institute Residential

School, or "Mush Hole." This year, the exhibit will run for two weeks. And in July, Kelly will be displaying the works that she is currently creating at an exhibit at the Glenhyrst Art Gallery of Brant in Brantford.

We look forward to seeing more of the work that Kelly is producing as part of what is clearly a very fruitful residency. If you are unable to attend any of her gallery exhibits, we invite you to view samples of her work on [her website](#).



NEW INDIGENOUS INITIATIVES COORDINATOR AT WESTERN'S AFFILIATED COLLEGES

King's, Brescia and Huron University colleges, affiliates of Western, recently announced that they have hired Sean Hoogterp as Indigenous Initiatives Coordinator. Sean is from *Bkejwanong* Territory (Walpole Island First Nation), and he has deep roots with Western: his great grandfather was the first Indigenous person from Walpole Island to graduate from Huron and be ordained as an Anglican minister.

Sean's role will be to advance Indigenous initiatives at the three colleges. Similar to the work undertaken by OII, his mandate will also include strengthening relationships with local Indigenous communities and promoting the Indigenization and decolonization of the curriculum. OII wishes Sean a warm welcome, and we look forward to working together in creating a welcoming space for Indigenous students across the Western University system.



NEW INDIGENOUS FACULTY JOINS WESTERN

Western recently welcomed another Indigenous faculty member to the University. Jeff Warnock is a graduate of Western Law and is a Visiting Associate Professor who teaches the Indigenous Law course. He is also the coach for Western's *Kawaskimhon* Talking Circle moot team. Jeff is a citizen of the Métis Nation of Ontario and previously worked as a litigator, as the Senior Public Policy Advisor for the Métis Nation of Ontario, and on student programs and diversity outreach initiatives at Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP. During his time at Blakes, Jeff worked on the Law in Action Within Schools Program, was responsible for a number of student outreach events discussing diversity on Bay Street, and oversaw the pre-law Diversity and Inclusion/Indigenous Summer Student Program.

PROGRESS ON THE INDIGENOUS LEARNING SPACE



We are all eagerly awaiting the launch of the Indigenous Learning Space, and further progress was made towards completion of the building during the Winter. Of special note was the installation of the new skylight, which was lowered into place at the end of February (shown above). The exterior tiered garden has also begun to take shape, with the arbour's round footings completed and its anchor plates now set. The garden will have a strong focus on white corn, which has great cultural and historical importance for Indigenous people of this region.

New life for an old tree

Another exciting design element that is coming into focus is the repurposing of an oak tree that was on the site. For 350 years the tree stood along the banks of *Deshkan Ziibiing/Kanakeles* growing, thriving, teaching and giving back to Creation. It bore witness to the Anishinaabe as they inhabited this land, when the Haudenosaunee travelled through the hunting grounds, and at a time when the Neutral Confederacy still called this place home. It was also here to welcome the new settlers, as they too were drawn to the power of *Deshkan Ziibiing/Kanakeles*.

After 350 years of witnessing, the tree succumbed to disease. It will find new life, however, as part of the new Indigenous Learning Space. Parts of the tree were saved as "cookie slices" and cross-sectional slabs, and for several years were cured. They are now ready to be incorporated into the Space—with two slices mounted in the main gathering area and the lower level, respectively,

and two slabs converted into tables. As Paula Hedgepeth, Community Relations and Space Manager at OII, notes: "The tree still has teachings to offer, and it will be loved and honoured here. It is a natural fit for this new building. Its story will be told."

Fall launch anticipated

The official opening date of the space remains uncertain, as a recent engineering review revealed some issues still to be resolved. We are hoping for an opening date that will coincide with the return to classes in September, and we will let the Western community know once the new engineering schedule has been determined.

On the programming side, we have released a survey soliciting input from OII stakeholders on event and schedule planning, and how the space can be used. The survey will also help us deliberate on the all-important question of how to name the space so that it reflects its role as the centrepiece of Indigenous life at Western.

We are also pleased to note that the University has allocated a generous amount of funding from its Strategic Priorities Fund to facilitate programming and help advance Indigenous initiatives at Western. Together with our regular programming budget, this additional financing will help ensure that the launch of the space will mark a major step forward in making Western a place where Indigenous ways of knowing and being can flourish—objectives of the strategic plans of OII and Western..

OII RELEASES ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT



The past year was a very important one for Indigenous people at Western, as we marked a number of significant milestones. Most notable was the celebration of the first anniversary of OII, whose presence on the Western campus has signalled a new stage in the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the University.

Under OII's leadership, Western has made significant moves towards decolonization and Indigenization. During the past year, the University launched a pilot program in Indigenous languages, hired new Indigenous faculty, established an Indigenous alumni

chapter and made reconciliation with Indigenous people an explicit commitment of its strategic plan, *Towards Western at 150*. The Office also conducted a survey of stakeholders as part of its preparation of an updated Indigenous Strategic Plan, and launched numerous initiatives related to student life, research, curriculum development, student recruitment and other projects that contribute to our strategic mission of elevating Indigenous presence on campus. A summary of our main achievements during the past year is available in our **2021 Annual Progress Report**, which is also available on our website.

This is to:ta' • Lightning the Fire
 (On^yote'a:ka): to stand up the fire

ELDER SPOTLIGHT

In each issue of *Laotsyá:n*, we spotlight the teachings from a local Indigenous Elder. In this edition, **Elder Myrna Kicknosway** shares her wisdom about living in connection with Creation. Myrna is a familiar face at Western, as she graciously advises OII on a wide range of issues related to Western's engagement with Indigenous Peoples and cultures.



BOOZHOO, AANII, SHEKON, GREETINGS.

My name is Myrna Kicknosway and I am from *Bkejwanong* Territory (Walpole Island First Nation). I have served as a Visiting Elder with Western University's Indigenous Student Centre and Indigenous Postsecondary Education Council for more than 10 years, and most recently within the Office of Indigenous Initiatives. My life journey and personal healing offer me an ever-expanding appreciation of Indigenous knowledge and traditions, and our capacity as human beings to grow and transform. I welcome the opportunity to share with you today.

As I reflect on the times we are in, my thoughts and direction of my conversations change daily. I ground myself and listen to what Creation and humankind are telling me—these also change daily. What I notice lately as a constant is that everything is shifting in the universe.

It is a critical time for humankind to reconnect with the Earth, with Creation and with our original instructions. This applies globally for all Indigenous people of the world and the four colours of man. Each of us all have original instructions and these original instructions are similar—but due to the impact of colonization, the original teachings and instructions have been abandoned by many. These original instructions having been put down has negatively impacted us all—this impact goes back to connection to the earth and water. That connection has been partially severed. The good thing is that we still know

those original instructions, they are still within us. We just have to be brave enough and willing to put Creation first.

Look and see what Creation is telling us. What are the messages of reciprocity that we can learn from the trees and the plants, the water, the animals and the seasonal cycles? Looking within ourselves to recognize what is out of balance. This hyper self-awareness is critical. To reflect on ourselves and how we are contributing to the wellbeing of society, people, Earth, animals and the climate—everything in Creation—sky world, earth plane and the underground. It is time for us to pick up our responsibilities to Creation, to the world. This is our responsibility as humankind.

Women are the water and men are the fire. Too much of one will destroy the other. There has to be a balance. We have those different issues that are contributing to an unhealthiness of the Earth and Creation, but we can change that.

There are many instances that can be given as an example; to take only one, the abuse of drugs around the world: not following the original instruction, not knowing who you are and how to walk on this Earth comes from the disconnection that is a result of colonization. It's not just one person or one group that must change—it is all of us who have to change and reflect, and then move forward to create change for the betterment of Creation and Mother Earth.



INDIGENOUS VOICES— PEETOOTEEWIIT

We are delighted to announce that Indigenous Voices has a new name! It is now known as *Peetooteewiit* (paa-toe-tao-weet), a Lunaapéewak word meaning “come and visit.”

This renaming comes out of a desire to honour local Indigenous languages, which is a part of Western’s ongoing commitment to decolonization and Indigenization. Oll currently leads many initiatives to advance Indigenous languages on campus, and naming is one of them. A name holds a deep responsibility and meaning, and for this initiative we wanted to find a name that reflects the

aim of Indigenous Voices to be a welcoming and safe space for sharing Indigenous ways of being and knowing. To that end, we asked Ian McCallum, Lunaapéewak language learner and teacher and member of the Delaware–Munsee Nation, to devise a new name. We explained to Ian what Indigenous Voices was all about, and he has given us the name Peetooteewiit. We are honoured to receive it, and

we look forward to welcoming you to Peetooteewiit in the coming months. Our upcoming topics are:

April – Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

May – Food Sovereignty

June – National Indigenous History Month, Celebrating Indigenous Voices

BIINDIGEN PRESENTS AKI-WAYN-ZIH: AN INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEW



The *Biindigen* Indigenous Learning Circle is a space where members of Western come together for conversations touching on a wide range of Indigenous themes by engaging with Indigenous stories and storytellers. Next month we are delighted to welcome a captivating storyteller in the person of Anishinaabe Elder and Knowledge Keeper Eli Baxter. Eli was profiled in our Winter edition, and members of the Western community will be able to learn more from his experiences and worldview in the lunchtime online sessions noted below. You can also pick up a copy of Eli’s book, *Aki-Wayn-zih: A person as worthy as the earth*, at Western Libraries, or order a copy through GoodMinds.com.

Language, Land and Love: Sharing in stories with Eli Baxter

Date: May 5, 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Location: virtual

To register, click [here](#)

In June, *Biindigen* will be recreating the 30 Ways in 30 Days Challenge for National Indigenous History Month—we invite you to come learn with us! *Biindigen* will be hosting an event on June 23rd in recognition of National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21st. [Log in or sign up with OWL to learn more.](#)

HEAD AND HEART FELLOWSHIPS— NEW COORDINATOR



It is very pleased to welcome Tammy Johnson as the new Program Coordinator for the Head and Heart Indigenous Research Fellowship.

Tammy is a Western graduate, having completed her Master's in Library and Information Science in 2000. She then became a public librarian with a focus on critical engagement, and since 2019 has been a communications instructor at Anishinabek Educational Institute. At the Institute she offers guidance in areas related to academic writing, research and advocacy, and has been honoured to gather with students around bundles and medicines, centring

Indigenous knowledges while engaging with literacies.

As a lifelong learner, Tammy has acquired qualifications in political science, public relations, early childhood education and adult learning. She has also contributed to local and provincial projects concerned with Indigenous education, cultural safety, harm reduction and anti-colonial pedagogies. Over the past seven years, Tammy has been receiving a different type of education, being re-introduced to ceremonies and becoming an oshkaabewis (ceremonial attendant or messenger). She carries a tremendous amount of love for her teachers, ancestors and the young

ones stepping into their gifts.

An Auntie has given Tammy the playful nickname of *pakine*, which is Anishinaabemowin for grasshopper, as she tends to take leaps of faith. These leaps are becoming easier the stronger she becomes in her identity as an Anishinaabekwe from Caldwell First Nation. She is grateful that her latest leap has her working at Western this summer, supporting students and faculty as they engage with Indigenous research methods and knowledges.

Tammy can be contacted at tjohn64@uwo; reach out to say hello and inquire about the Head and Heart Indigenous Research Fellowship. Recipients for the current year will be announced soon.

BUILDING RECONCILIATION FORUM RESCHEDULED TO 2023



As announced in our last edition, Western was chosen to host the seventh annual Building Reconciliation Forum, a national colloquy dedicated to advancing Truth and Reconciliation in the academy. The Forum was scheduled for June of this year, but in light of the continuing pandemic it was decided to move the date to June of 2023. While this was disappointing, it was clearly the correct decision, given the ongoing uncertainty about health protocols and in-person

attendance. We want to ensure that everyone who wants to is able to attend, and that their experience of the forum is the best that it can be; re-scheduling it to next year is the only way to achieve that.

We have revised our planning accordingly, and we look forward to providing a full schedule of events for the forum. They will be centred around the theme of "Education for Reconciliation: Rebuilding Stronger and with Intentionality." Our aim is to include local

Indigenous communities and organizations, in addition to Indigenous faculty and scholars from across Canada, so that we give voice to the full range of Indigenous perspectives on Indigeneity in the postsecondary system. Of note is that the forum will take place in the new Indigenous Learning Space, which will be inaugurated this year. We will keep everyone informed of planning for the forum as it unrolls, and we look forward to welcoming you all in 2023.



INTRODUCING...THE NEW INDIGENOUS GONFALON!

Students, faculty and staff at the Indigenous Graduation Ceremony on April 1 were treated to an inspiring sight—Western’s own Indigenous gonfalon. A gonfalon a heraldic flag or banner, and gonfalons representing faculties, units and departments are carried into the Convocation every year. In 2020 the Convocation Committee contacted us to enquire about creating a gonfalon to represent Western’s Indigenous graduates, the Indigenous Student Centre and OII.

In the intervening time, we worked on a design that would embrace the diversity of the Indigenous community and represent the Indigenous experience at Western. We invited input from various quarters, and coordinated the numerous suggestions to develop a design that comprises the following:

- Deer hide and antler, representing the clan system and leadership
- Beaded imagery that represent the local First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Western University
- A version of the Creation story burned into the hide, to represent Indigenous worldviews and ontology

The gonfalon is hoisted on a staff carved from white pine, a valuable medicine as well as a symbol of strength and peace. The staff features inlays of copper, one of the original metals used by people across Turtle Island. Copper has long been used for both practical and artistic purposes, and today serves as a vessel for women to care for and carry *Nibiish/Onekanus/Mbuy/Water*.

The beadwork was done by Indigenous artists Donna Noah, Amanda Morin, Natalie Hill and Will Hedgepeth. The overall design was produced by Paula Cornelius-Hedgepeth with input from the community, and assembly by Red Eye Supply. It has been a long and rewarding process, and we hope that everyone at Western will see the gonfalon as another inspiring symbol of Indigenous pride and presence on campus.

ART AT THAMES HALL

As noted earlier this year in *Laotsyá:n*, the new Health and Wellness Centre located in Thames Hall issued a call for artists to provide artworks for its walls. This call came out of the \$35 million renovation of the building, which was completed recently. It features modern design and materials, with a focus on a new, three-storey atrium that is bathed in natural light from skylights and a courtyard terrace.

Wellness and the Circle of Life

The artist selected from the call is Thunder Day (Mike Cywink). In addition to being a visual artist, he is also a Student Mentor and Program Liaison for the Centre for School Mental Health at the Faculty of Education. His winning submission is titled *Wellness and the Circle of Life*, and a preliminary design is shown here. It will be a large mural that will welcome people as they enter the atrium, and it features a dramatic, colourful image replete with Indigenous symbolism.

The overall image stresses connection to Creation, water and Indigenous teachings. A turtle shell evokes Turtle Island, and the four colours of the medicine wheel signify the four cardinal directions, representing the diversity of origins of the Western community. The crane represents leadership, while the deer represents balance—it drinks from *Deshkan Ziibiing/Kanakeles* (the Antler River) that flows through London. Balance is also emphasized by the fire that serves as a counterpoint to water and forms the central element of ceremony, which aims to restore spiritual balance and harmony.

Work on the mural will begin soon, and will involve not only the artist himself, but also students from the London high school system who will serve as artist assistants. We are looking forward to its completion, and will let our readers know when it can be viewed on site.



Wellness and the Circle of Life by Thunder Day (Mike Cywink)

Laotsyá:n is published four times a year by the Office of Indigenous Initiatives at Western University. The views and opinions expressed by contributing writers do not necessarily reflect those of the University. If you would like to receive this newsletter regularly, please **subscribe to *Laotsyá:n***. The current edition is also available on the **OII website**, along with archived editions.

Office of Indigenous Initiatives

The Office of Indigenous Initiatives leads system-wide change at Western University in order to advance Truth and Reconciliation efforts and achieve equitable outcomes for Indigenous Peoples. It plays a lead role in championing Indigenous strategic directions; building collaborative and community-engaged partnerships; and supporting campus partners in implementing Western's Indigenous Strategic Plan.



Indigenous
Initiatives



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