

2021

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

Western University
Office of Indigenous Initiatives



Indigenous
Initiatives

Western 

Land Acknowledgement

Western University is located on the territories of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Chonnonton Nations. The Huron-Wendat Nation also has connections to this territory. London and surrounding area is covered by Treaty 6 London Township, Treaty 7 Sombra Township, and Treaty 21 Longwoods. This land is home to diverse Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) whom we must restore as contemporary stewards of the land; by recognizing their relationships to land, we make explicit Indigenous Peoples' presence and rights to self-determination. This report is one of many initiatives establishing ongoing responsibility and accountability to Indigenous Peoples.

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Message from the Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Indigenous Initiatives)

She:koli, Aanii, Koolamalsihmwa, Greetings. It is a great honour for me to present this annual update on the implementation of Western's **Indigenous Strategic Plan** and the University's vision for advancing reconciliation with Indigenous communities.

Over the past year, key milestones were achieved on the path towards that vision. Most significant was the celebration of the first anniversary of the **Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII)** in May. This powerful office provides many essential services to Western by acting as a sounding board for students, staff, faculty, and community members; delivering strategic leadership within administrative and academic endeavours; providing direction for Indigenous data, research, and pedagogical and curricular initiatives; and engaging with Indigenous communities and organizations in the London area.

With the establishment of OII, Western is beginning to integrate Indigenous worldviews into the way we think, work and teach. We are hiring more staff, refining Western's strategic approach to Indigenous initiatives, and engaging the entire learning community in the dialogue needed to advance Truth and Reconciliation. The achievements of the past year—with leadership provided by members of the Indigenous community at Western, together with significant allyship, and collaboration of Western's senior leadership—demonstrate tangible progress. The process of decolonization at an institution of higher learning—and in our wider society—takes time, and the path forward is not always straight or easy; yet I remain confident that together we will continue to address the Strategic Directions set out in the ISP and build a robust and Indigenized community of learning at Western of which we can all be proud.

Christy R. Bressette

Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President
(Indigenous Initiatives)



Message from Elder Myrna Kicknosway

Aaniin, Boozhoo. Affirming Indigeneity is a way of healing—for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. For generations, Indigenous identity has been under assault, resulting in untold harm for countless individuals, families, communities, and society. At Western, work led by Indigenous peoples is underway to reclaim that identity, so that we can heal a broken world.

Universities in Canada have a critical role to play in this struggle, and I am heartened that Western has embraced that role through the Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII). By committing to decolonization, Western has acknowledged its responsibility to society to both learn and unlearn. This work is led by OII, which engages everyone in the spirit of “nothing about us without us.”

I am pleased to see the enormous progress underway at Western to heal and reeducate by privileging Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Such enduring knowledge is a gift that will help everyone return to a place of respect and balance on a global scale.

The work towards reconciliation led by Indigenous people at Western fills me with hope for the revitalization of Indigenous cultures, languages and identities, which are essential to restoring harmony and balance in all relationships.

Elder Myrna Kicknosway

Bkejwanong Territory (Walpole Island First Nation)



Message from the President

Increasing Indigenous voices and presence across all levels of work, study, and research at Western is a commitment formally enshrined in our new strategic plan, launched in June.

Towards Western @ 150 also reaffirms our ongoing commitment to fulfilling the goals of our Indigenous Strategic Plan, approved in 2016.

This report is a testament to the painstaking work of everyone in the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, and all those at Western who have helped to make this important commitment a significant institutional priority.

We are deeply grateful for the opportunity to raise the profile of Indigenous Initiatives at Western and remain steadfast in our support for initiatives aimed at systemic change and achieving equitable outcomes for Indigenous Peoples.

Alan Shepard
President & Vice-Chancellor



Message from the Provost

Western continues to make progress toward system-wide change that advances Truth and Reconciliation efforts and equitable outcomes for Indigenous Peoples in our campus community and beyond.

This past year, our country faced a watershed moment as we mourned the discovery of unmarked student graves at the sites of former Residential Schools. While Indigenous peoples have always known about these missing children, it underscored the need for Truth and Reconciliation in Canada. Western's observation of Canada's inaugural National Day for Truth and Reconciliation provided opportunities for everyone to engage in the work of reconciliation.

For many, these events generated a new level of awareness of the need to reflect and respond to the enduring trauma suffered by Indigenous Peoples because of colonization.

Here at Western, Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing have gained momentum and relevance across our campus in response to the innovative and decolonial insight they afford. Further, our connections with the Indigenous communities in the region have deepened, leading to heightened levels of collaboration and partnerships. These successes have been made possible through the diligent work of colleagues in the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and supportive allies.

We've made important initial steps in the work to rebuild relationships with Indigenous people based upon respect, but there is more work to be done and the university remains committed to the journey ahead.

John Doerksen
Acting Provost & Vice-President (Academic)



Message from the Associate Vice-President (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion)

"If you want to go fast, go alone; but if you want to go far, go together."

This proverb, often attributed to Africa, captures neatly the strong and beautiful relationship between the Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII) and Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). OII was supportive of the EDI office from the first day of its opening in September 2021, guiding and helping ground the office in the community. Together, the OII and EDI offices have launched the first-ever Equity Census, reached out to various groups and sectors of Western, and continued to provide leadership in the conversation about equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization.

Informed by Indigenous values and approaches to leadership, Dr. Christy R. Bressette, together with the support of many other leaders, staff, faculty members, students and staff, is ensuring that Indigenous ways of knowing, learning, and teaching are embedded in work to implement Western's Strategic Plan (2021). These approaches to transformation and reconciliation are dignified, transparent, and reflective.

OII's achievements are many, but the enduring one is that which teaches reconciliation and invites allies to work together through meaningful change.

Western generally, and the EDI office specifically, is blessed to walk, work, and learn with OII.

Miigwech!

Opiyo Oloya

Associate Vice President (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion)



Message from the Co-Chair of the Indigenous Postsecondary Education Council (IPEC)

I am pleased to share this report as Western's Community Co-Chair of IPEC about the achievements and work of the last year. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Western and the Office of Indigenous Initiatives continued to work and support Indigenous students, staff, and faculty.

IPEC provides an opportunity for local Indigenous communities to have influence at Western. I have been Co-Chair since 2016, and am proud to say that Western has taken some great steps towards Truth and Reconciliation since then—and I look forward to the continuation of this important work.

I would like to thank Professor Candace Brunette-Debassige for her role within IPEC and for the enormous contributions she made as Special Advisor to the Provost (Indigenous Initiatives) in helping to establish OII. I also want to welcome Christy Bressette to her new role as Western's first Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Indigenous Initiatives). Christy started in March of 2021 and with her extensive background and commitment to Indigenous education, I believe this work will continue to build a brighter future for all who attend and work at Western.

Jody Noah
IPEC Co-Chair



Office of Indigenous Initiatives

The Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII) leads the system-wide change required to advance Truth and Reconciliation efforts at Western (drawing on the report of the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#) and its [Calls to Action](#)); achieve equitable outcomes for Indigenous Peoples; and implement Western's [Indigenous Strategic Plan \(ISP\)](#) (2016). The Office is led by the Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President for Indigenous Initiatives, and its mandate is to champion Western's commitment to increase an Indigenous presence across all levels of work, study and research.

OII's responsibilities include support for strategic planning and implementation; communications and reporting; community engagement; policy development and practice; space planning and management; curriculum and training development; student affairs, access, and recruitment strategies; faculty and staff recruitment and retention strategies; and research and scholarship strategies. These initiatives all contribute to the work of decolonization and Indigenization at Western, and it is important to acknowledge and thank the many Indigenous people and allies who have helped to advance these goals. We would also like to give a special 'shout out' to the [OII team](#), the [staff of the Indigenous Student Centre](#), and the Indigenous faculty.

ISP Evaluation

OII's work supports the implementation of Western's ISP (2016), which identifies eight strategic priorities. In the fall of 2021, OII undertook a survey of the Western community to evaluate the University's progress in achieving the priorities; a brief summary of the most noteworthy achievements and opportunities for improvement noted by survey respondents is presented below, grouped by priority area.

01

Strengthen and build relationships with Indigenous communities

Achievements: university-preparatory courses offered in communities; engagement with Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers; launch of Indigenous language courses.

Opportunities for improvement: foster greater inclusivity, consistency, and accountability; address barriers to access for Indigenous students; provide consistent engagement and reciprocal communication with Indigenous communities.

02

Nurture an inclusive campus culture that values Indigenous Peoples, perspectives, and ways of knowing

Achievements: the creation of spaces for Indigenous learning and knowledge, such as the Indigenous Learning Circle (Biindigen); virtual knowledge-sharing events and webinars; innovative institutional roles, such as the Indigenous Curriculum and Pedagogy Advisor, and the Community Relations Coordinator at USC; responsive structures, such as the OII itself, and the Indigenous Curriculum and Learning Subcommittee.

Opportunities for improvement: provide strategic resources; incentivize responsibility among faculty and students; and ensure for adequate Indigenous representation in decision-making.

03

Enhance Indigenous students' experiences

Achievements: the work and supports put in place by the ISC and OII in enhancing the experience of Indigenous students; increased financial aid and scholarship opportunities; establishment of the Indigenous Financial Aid Coordinator role and the continuation of the Indigenous Transition Program, formerly the Academic Transition Opportunities Program.

Opportunities for improvement: continue to address persistent racism and misinformation in the classroom through education; and increase the recruitment of Indigenous staff across faculties and in student-facing roles.

05

Achieve excellence in Indigenous teaching, learning, and pedagogy

Achievements: work undertaken by the Indigenous Curriculum and Pedagogy Advisor; the online Learning Bundles project; the release of [Maamwi Gzikewag: Indigenous Curriculum & Learning Report](#); KAIROS Blanket Exercise; new Indigenous-themed courses at Western.

Opportunities for improvement: implementation of quality assurance within the use of Indigenous knowledge; growing the impact of Indigenous curriculum and pedagogies; and providing guidance to maximize effectiveness of designated faculty resources in support of the work of decolonization and Indigenization.

07

Become a university of choice for Indigenous students

Achievements: Western community dedicated to supporting Indigenous recruitment and admissions; development of an Indigenous-focused recruitment and marketing strategy; and an increase in [scholarships](#), awards, and a variety of activities and events aimed at Indigenous students.

Opportunities for improvement: developing a wider awareness of success for Indigenous recruitment; continue to provide students in areas ranging from mental health needs to systemic barriers to learning; and promoting improved connections with local Indigenous communities and organizations.

04

Achieve excellence in Indigenous research and scholarship

Achievements: growth in numbers and quality of Indigenous scholars at Western; the awarding of grants to Indigenous faculty; the [Head and Heart Fellowship Program](#); increased mentorship and support for Indigenous researchers, faculty, staff, and students.

Opportunities for improvement: increase resourcing, awareness, and impact of Indigenous research; and highlight the need for reciprocity and Indigenous research ethics.

06

Decolonize and Indigenize Western's institutional practices and space

Achievements: proliferation of Indigenous courses, training, and activities at Western; inviting Elders to convocations; construction of the new Indigenous Learning Space; producing the [Guide for Working with Indigenous Students](#).

Opportunities for improvement: continue to address institutional racism and the persistent legacies of colonization through structural change in support of decolonization and Indigenization on campus.

08

Increase representation of Indigenous staff and faculty members.

Achievements: increase in Indigenous staff and faculty; activities and events supporting the work of faculty; and the growing selection of Indigenous courses at Western.

Opportunities for improvement: focusing on increasing retention rates of Indigenous faculty and staff; providing innovative opportunities for advancement; alleviating pressure for Indigenous leaders and faculty; and increase the representation of Indigenous people at the University.

2021

MILESTONES ON THE ROAD TO INDIGENIZATION

Indigenous Students

Our places Indigenous students at the centre of our initiatives, and Western welcomes Indigenous students and their perspectives, which enrich academic and student life. Students are spread over four campuses, with the main campus hosting most Indigenous students and the **Indigenous Student Centre** (ISC). Indigenous student numbers remained steady despite the pandemic, with enrolment in the fall of 2020 standing at 591, and in the winter of 2021 at 575. Over 85% of these were undertaking a full-time course of study.

We strive to be a supportive and inclusive environment, and our dedicated staff at the ISC go to great lengths to foster community on campus and a safe space for Indigenous students. ISC supports and liaises with the following Indigenous student leaderships roles: the University Student Council's Indigenous Relations Coordinator; the Indigenous Students Association and its Executive Council; and the Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement Coordinator (SAGE). These roles promote student voice and advocacy across campus through various venues and committee work, as well as holding formal roles within IPEC.

The **ISC staff** is composed of eight positions under the leadership of the Director, Amanda Myers, with the most recent additions over the past year being the Manager of Admissions and Enrollment, the Recruitment Coordinator and the Financial Aid Coordinator. Through its staff, physical space, and programming the ISC provides Indigenous students access to a wide range of academic, personal, and cultural supports, such as:

- culturally relevant space and food security;
- counselling and Elder support for academic and personal needs;
- financial support and opportunities;
- tutoring specific to subject and writing skills;

- Indigenous cultural education, peer mentorship and leadership;
- outreach and engagement with Indigenous youth and communities across Ontario;
- employment opportunities; and
- a sense of community.

In the past year ISC managed two significant financial opportunities in partnership with Western's Office of the Registrar:

- the **National Indigenous Scholarship Program**, for incoming Indigenous students who plan on attending Western University's main campus (two scholarships for students applying from high school and one for a student applying from a post-secondary institution, all valued at \$50,000 each); and
- the **Local First Nations Scholarship Program**, for First Nations students from local territories (up to \$15,000 for full-time students and up to \$9,000 for part-time students).

Throughout the pandemic, the ISC has continued to provide all programming and support, both virtually and in person, with a high level of engagement and professionalism, and the insight it has gained from virtual models will prove useful in the future.



Faculty

Western has committed to increasing the complement of Indigenous faculty members, and in 2019-20 began a cluster hiring process to achieve that goal. In 2021, the University added four new Indigenous faculty members, and initiated the process of hiring new Indigenous faculty for a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair, a Tier 2 Canada Research Chair, and up to six additional faculty positions. Profiles of Indigenous faculty and their areas of expertise can be found on the [faculty page](#) of the OII website.

OII recognizes that faculty play a central role in Indigenizing the University, most notably through the curriculum. While Indigenous faculty are key leaders in this process, all who teach at Western share responsibility for integrating Indigenous ways of knowing and doing into the learning experience. To that end, OII supports the entire faculty with curriculum resources and cultural awareness and development workshops, such as the

KAIROS Blanket Exercise, and we facilitate access for faculty to Indigenous Elders. A second Curriculum and Pedagogy advisor will also join the Office in the beginning of 2022 to help advance Indigenization of the curriculum, which will give a strong impetus to our curriculum efforts. The University also appointed Dr. Candace Brunette-Debassige as Indigenous Teaching Fellow for a three-year period beginning in July 2021.

Spy Dénomme-Welch
Associate Professor and
Canada Research Chair in
Indigenous Arts, Knowledge
Systems, and Education



Sally Kewayosh
Lecturer and Creative
Practitioner,
Faculty of Information
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Cody Groat
Assistant Professor,
Department of History and
Indigenous Studies Program



Sofia Locklear
Assistant Professor,
Faculty of Information
and Media Studies



Administration, Policy, and Infrastructure

Indigenous students thrive best in a learning environment that acknowledges and celebrates their Indigeneity. Western undertook the following initiatives in 2021 to provide a supportive physical and administrative environment:

- ▶ **Physical spaces:** Design and construction proceeded apace on the new Indigenous **Learning Space**, which is due to open in the spring of 2022. A milestone on the road to decolonization and Indigenization at Western, the space will serve as a central hub for fostering Indigenous worldviews and epistemologies on campus. As an institutional home for Indigenous students, faculty, and communities, it will help to diversify curriculum content and teaching approaches through Indigenous gathering and learning, with indoor meeting and teaching areas complemented by an outdoor classroom and food and medicine garden.
- ▶ **Policy:** Indigenous initiatives were identified as a priority under Western's new Strategic Plan, in recognition of the need to develop a systematic approach to decolonization and Indigenization at the University. OII will implement this new plan by updating the ISP, which was worked on in 2021 and will be finalized in 2022. The Office also developed guidelines for affirming Indigenous identity in the recruitment of Indigenous faculty, which took on urgency in light of controversies surrounding identity that arose at some postsecondary institutions across Turtle Island. Other significant policy initiatives include:
 - Close collaboration with the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion on a campus-wide **Equity Census** in the fall;
 - Indigenous representation and oversight on all Senate subcommittees;
 - support for the President's Advisory Committee on the Environment and Sustainability (PACES) through a workshop led by an Indigenous knowledge keeper to help orient Western's environmental initiatives with an Indigenous perspective; and
 - the completion of a comprehensive guide to **developing land acknowledgements** that also serves as a learning module on related issues, such as treaties.
- ▶ **Administration:** Administrative positions across the Western campus are critically important roles that support the work of decolonization and Indigenization by ensuring that Indigenous voices shape the conversation around transformational change. With the appointment of its first Vice-President/Associate Vice-President (Indigenous Initiatives) in March, and new hires in OII to carry out its mandate, Western signalled its commitment to this process. The Office welcomed a new **Manager of Indigenous Admissions and Enrolment** and an **Indigenous Recruiter** to develop and implement Western's Indigenous Recruitment and Marketing Strategy.



Curriculum and Academics

Indigenizing the curriculum is at the heart of Indigenizing the academy. OII is a catalyst for integrating Indigenous perspectives and pedagogies into Western's approach to education, and we made significant steps in that direction in 2021. Major projects included:

- ▶ **Our first e-campus initiative, providing online courses in Anishinaabemowin and Indigenous languages revitalization.** The courses ran for six weeks beginning on October 1st and were heavily oversubscribed, providing a strong basis for continuing this initiative and expanding it. OII is strongly committed to language revitalization, as it constitutes a major building block in decolonization.
- ▶ **The development of Indigenous curriculum through *Maatoo-kiiying Gaa-miinigoo-wiziying (Sharing Our Gifts)*, an Indigenous Online Learning Bundles project.** Led by Dr. Candace Brunette-Debassige in the Faculty of Education, and supported by Sara Mai Chitty, OII's Curriculum and Pedagogy Advisor, the multi-year initiative involves creating a collection of online resources that Western instructors can integrate into their classrooms. The resources are developed through collaborative processes involving Indigenous scholars and Indigenous knowledge holders, addressing broad Indigenous concepts that have interdisciplinary application. In its first year, the project developed six bundles that covered a variety of themes, ranging from Indigenous leadership to Indigenous voices in the media.

- ▶ **Continuation of the Indigenous Learning Fund, launched in the fall of 2019.** The Fund provides recipients one-time, single-year grants up to a maximum of \$7500 to advance innovation in Indigenous learning at Western through excellence in Indigenous teaching, curriculum, and learning, as well as by strengthening Indigenous community partnerships and connections. Four projects were awarded, and recipients will submit their reports in February 2022.

Other significant initiatives included the release of *Maamwi Gzikewag, the Indigenous Curriculum and Learning Subcommittee's report* on Indigenizing and decolonizing curriculum (which includes on page 22 a map of existing curriculum within courses); launching *The Path*, a five-module learning program on Indigenous issues; promoting an Indigenous postdoctoral fellowship through Western Research; and collaborating with Western Libraries on the management of Indigenous collections. This work involves not only raising the profile of the Indigenous collections, but also decolonizing the subject headings and descriptions used in the library catalogue under the aegis of the Libraries' Decolonizing Description Working Group.

Research

In June of 2021, the **Indigenous Research Subcommittee** released their final report, which recommended the creation of an Indigenous Research Centre at Western. The aim of this enterprise is to support the distinct cultural and shared research needs of Indigenous and allied scholars through interdisciplinary work that enhances available funding; increase space and support for Indigenous research; provide opportunities for collaboration and mentorship; open up research pathways for Indigenous students; and develop relationships with Indigenous communities and organizations across Western that support Indigenous research priorities. Additional details about this initiative will be shared in the spring.

A major component of our research agenda is the **Head and Heart Fellowship Program**, a flagship initiative that provides Indigenous students—both at the undergraduate and graduate levels—the opportunity to engage in academic research, join a community of scholars for mutual education and support, and advance their professional development. Head and Heart fellowships nurture new Indigenous scholars through

Indigenous pedagogy in disciplines of their choice. In addition to engaging in research with professors, Fellows learn various career skills and participate in weekly Learning Circles with other recipients, as well as in a summer symposium. The Program's contribution to Indigenous research at Western was also complemented this year by the addition of two inaugural Indigenous postgraduate fellowships.



Campus and Community

OII supports Indigeneity at the University through ongoing engagement with the Western community and Indigenous people beyond the campus in a variety of fora.

► **On-campus:** The Office coordinates the activities of several important bodies that advance Indigenous issues within the University, including the Indigenous Faculty Advisory Council (IFAC), which assembles Indigenous faculty members to discuss areas of common interest and provide guidance to OII; the **Indigenous Postsecondary Education Council (IPEC)**, which includes Indigenous communities and organizations outside of Western in its membership, and whose role is to provide broad strategic advice to the University on issues of Indigeneity and education; and the Indigenous Languages Advisory Group (ILAG). ILAG oversees Western's Indigenous languages program development, with a focus on supporting language revitalization of the languages of the three First Nations that are closest to the University. It includes Language Keepers from these Nations, as well as representatives of Anishinabek Education Institute, Six Nations Polytechnic, and Western.

These opportunities for regular engagement are supplemented by special events, such as observance of National Indigenous Peoples Day and National Indigenous History Month in June, including a 30-day Indigenous History Month Online Challenge; Orange Shirt Day; and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (NDTR), which was declared a statutory federal holiday in 2021. NDTR served as a major occasion for OII to engage the entire Western community in honouring those who experienced Residential Schools and recognizing the resultant loss and intergenerational trauma that carried over into

their families and communities; as well as addressing the wider issues involved in Truth and Reconciliation. NDTR was observed on campus and beyond, as we prepared an entire day's worth of programming whose highlights included hosting a sacred fire, providing a lunch of traditional foods, screening a variety of Indigenous films, and promoting a lecture by **Cody Groat**, Professor of History and Indigenous Studies, on the history of residential schools in Canada.

We also amplified Indigenous perspectives through numerous avenues, including:

- workshops on such topics as Land Acknowledgements, Decolonizing the Online Classroom, Cultural Humility, and Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogical Approaches to Curriculum;
- the KAIROS Blanket Exercise, which we adapted to a virtual format during the pandemic;
- Western's first Indigenous **artist-in-residence**, who is hosted under the umbrella of the Department of Visual Arts;
- the Indigenous Voices Series, an ongoing speakers event that features Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers sharing their wisdom with the Western community;
- the **Mbwaach'idiwag** podcast, which explores Indigenous themes and issues in a context of relational pedagogy; and
- **Biindigen**, Western's Indigenous Learning Circle, which fosters an exploration of Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing.

We will be adding to these offerings in 2022 with an Indigenous Teaching and Learning Series that will support decolonizing and Indigenizing of the curriculum, as well as engaging with the **Indigenous Learning Bundles**.

We prioritize communication with stakeholders, and to that end we launched **Laotsyá:n (The Messenger)** in 2021, a quarterly newsletter that will serve as a regular update for Indigenous-related news and events. This complements a longstanding **weekly newsletter for students** that is prepared and disseminated by the Indigenous Student Centre. We also welcomed the establishment of *Indigenous at Western*, an alumni chapter for Indigenous graduates of the University, as an additional forum for dialogue and engagement. *Indigenous at Western* launched during Homecoming with a Cedar Tea hosted by the Associate Vice-President (Indigenous Initiatives), an event that was followed by the formation of a Leadership Circle in December to strategize on recruitment and event planning. The chapter is being guided and supported by the Alumni Committee and it is anticipated that growing awareness of the chapter will foster closer relationships between Western and Indigenous people beyond the campus.

► **Indigenous communities:** Indigenous communities beyond the main campus play an important role in our mission, and we strive to include these communities in our initiatives. One of the most important efforts in this regard is the preparation we have undertaken for **Building Reconciliation Forum 2023: "Education for Reconciliation: Rebuilding Stronger and with Intentionality."** The Forum is an annual, high-level gathering of stakeholders in Indigenous postsecondary education across the country, and Western is thrilled to have been chosen as its next host. The Forum will serve as a major opportunity for Western to show leadership in Truth and Reconciliation by highlighting its progress in decolonization and Indigenization, as well as allow OII to build stronger relationships with Indigenous communities and organizations, both regionally and nationally.

A longstanding source of healthy relationships with Indigenous communities flows through the Mini-University Program, facilitated by ISC. This program has been in place for over 20 years, providing a space for Indigenous youth to see themselves within post-secondary studies, and removing the barriers of intergenerational trauma associated with sending our youth to receive education.



Challenges Ahead

Western has made considerable progress in implementing the ISP, but challenges remain. Most prominent among them is the need to engage a wider range of partners at the University to implement decolonization and Indigenization through reconciliation. Increased hiring of Indigenous faculty and staff using a focused recruitment strategy will help achieve this goal, but more needs to be done in recruiting non-Indigenous members of the community to undertake the educational and academic work that decolonization requires. OII will prioritize action toward this in the coming year.

We would like to thank all those who have partnered with us during the year to advance the work of Indigenization at Western, and we look forward to another year of growth.

Anushik, Meegwetch, Yaw:ko. Thank You.