

Final Report and Proposed Strategy:

***Strengthening our Relations to grow the capacity and impact of Western's Indigenous  
Research Environment***

Indigenous Research Sub-Committee

July 5, 2021

### **Land acknowledgement**

Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek (Ah-nish-in-a-bek), Haudenosaunee (Ho-den-no-show-nee), Lūnaapéewak (Len-ahpay- wuk) and Attawandaron (Add-a-won-da-run) peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. With this, we respect the longstanding relationships that Indigenous Nations have to this land, as they are the original caretakers. We acknowledge historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples (e.g., First Nations, Métis and Inuit) endure in Canada, and we accept responsibility as a public institution to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation as well as renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities through our teaching, research and community service.

### **Ode'imín: The heart berry as a metaphor for Indigenous Research**

Among many First Nations people of Turtle Island, the strawberry (or ode'imín as its known among the Anishnaabe) is known as the heart berry. Ode'imín emerges around the same time as the summer's first moon and it is representative of love, renewal and healing. Culturally, both the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Peoples recognize the healing powers of strawberry. Wild strawberries are rich in nutrients beneficial for a number of healing processes including detoxification and absorption of other nutrients. Local Indigenous communities also know strawberry as a symbol of reconciliation. Both Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe creation stories remind us of the gift of strawberries in healing relationships, both within oneself and with others. The sharing of strawberries between two parties can be an important first step in reconciling and nurturing injured or neglected relationships.

## Executive Summary

This Report builds on and promotes processes of indigenization that have been occurring at Western University for the past two decades, including our new [Strategic Plan](#) (2021), the [Indigenous Strategic Plan](#) (2017), the [Provost's Task Force on the Implementation of the Indigenous Strategic Plan](#) (2018), it also respond to the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#) within higher education. This body of work responds to and affirms the distinct relationship and commitment between Indigenous students, staff and faculty, and Western University. In these foundational documents, *Excellence in Indigenous Research and Scholarship* is identified a key direction for Western University. This Report articulates a concrete pathway and defined responsibilities for meeting this goal.

From September 2020 – June 2021, the Indigenous Research Sub-Committee engaged in a review of the academic literatures of Indigenous Research, and explored best practices and existing policies internally and at other institutions to identify a set of recommendations that will propel Western University toward excellence in Indigenous Research and Scholarship. Acknowledging Indigenous principles of respect, reciprocity, relevance, responsibility and relationships, the Sub-Committee engaged in a set of consultations with diverse members of the Western community including: Indigenous and allied researchers, students and scholars; staff, and senior research leaders. We learned that building a successful Indigenous Research environment is a shared responsibility with many distinct but interrelated roles and responsibilities. Four key pathways were identified: funding; curriculum and pedagogy; spaces of mentorships and belonging; and relationship building.

**The broad level recommendation of this Report is the creation of an Indigenous Research Centre.** Falling jointly under the administrative and financial responsibilities of the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and Western Research, the purpose of the Indigenous Research Centre will be to support the distinct cultural and shared research needs of Indigenous and allied scholars at Western University through interdisciplinary programs of work that will:

- Grow and improve access to reliable and consistent funding opportunities to support Indigenous Research at Western, especially among Indigenous Researchers and scholars;
- Increase capacity to support Indigenous Research through the provision of curriculum, pedagogy and culturally appropriate, community-based training;
- Increase opportunities and access to mentorship and belonging for Indigenous Researchers, Indigenous students, and allied researchers;
- Create distinct research career pathways for Indigenous students;
- Grow relationships around Indigenous Research within and across the Western community, and with Indigenous communities and organizations to support their self-determining research needs.

In the pages that follow, we provide the background and methodology of our committee work, which forms the substance of our recommendations and directions.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Indigenous Peoples as original researchers: Relationality and other Indigenous Research Principles**

Indigenous Peoples are the descendants of those Peoples who have lived in a territory or region prior to, and affected by, colonization. Indigenous Peoples are, and have always been, original researchers, as daily life and continued wellbeing has relied on a deep, interconnected, practiced knowledge of and relationship with their local ecologies. Winona LaDuke writes about Indigenous Knowledge as “the culturally and spiritually based way people relate to the Land and to one another.” In this definition, she recognizes the interrelatedness between the social, the physical (or ecological), the cultural, and the spiritual; in spite of the great diversity among Indigenous Peoples and communities, this relational worldview is a constant feature. Relationality is a principle that acknowledges that we, as living, non-living, and spiritual beings are constantly in relationship with one another. This concept forms the heart of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. It has guided Indigenous Peoples for millennia, to know, understand and interact with their natural and spiritual worlds, and served as the foundation of sophisticated political, economic, cultural, social and ecological systems.

### **Research harm and Indigenous Peoples**

For many Indigenous People and communities in Canada and around the world, research has a long, harmful and negative history of relationship with Indigenous people and communities. Research has supported the wide-scale appropriation, manipulation, testing and measurement of Indigenous cultures, bodies and lifeways. The bulk of this research has been conducted to meet the needs and interests of academia, with little to no benefit for Indigenous People or communities themselves. This approach to doing research “on Indigenous peoples” reinforced the continued control, surveillance and colonization of Indigenous peoples.

### **Creating an Indigenous Research Environment for Western University: Responding to Inequity**

In universities across Canada today, there is greater representation of Indigenous Peoples than ever before. We see greater numbers of Indigenous Peoples at all levels of the University: as learners, staff, faculty, and academic leaders. As Indigenous Peoples come into the University setting, they bring with them their whole selves, including their Indigenous knowledges, ideas and methodologies. They also bring with them rich histories and visions of success for health, wellness, strong and vibrant communities. They are often the first in their families to attend university and they carry with them important responsibilities to apply their learning for the betterment of their communities. Moreover, we see a coinciding increased engagement with Indigenous communities and organizations invited to guide and support Indigenous Research knowledge creation. This growth supports the promise of reducing long-term health, social, and economic inequities that persist in Indigenous communities.

Despite this hopeful and exciting trend, Indigenous communities and organizations continue to experience a range of historic and on-going inequities. These include, but are not limited to: lack of access to safe drinking water; the survivance of Indigenous languages; inadequate funding for education; poverty; racial and colonial discrimination; injustice in the legal system; treaty

violations; food insecurity; global climate change; public infrastructure; and infectious disease. All which compromise health and wellness. There has never been a more critical time for Indigenous Research to identify, describe and build a body of knowledge that can address these inequities, and support communities in their pathways to wellness.

Recognizing the depth of inequities Indigenous communities experience as well as the unique role of educational institutions in advancing reconciliation, Western must do more to create learning and research environments that are structurally and culturally capable of meeting the distinct needs and experiences of Indigenous scholars, students and communities, and fostering the success of their research and career pathways.

This reality begs three critically important questions:

- What are we doing, as a University, to respond to the needs of Indigenous scholars?
- What are we doing, as a University, to respond to the needs of Indigenous communities?
- What investments and structural changes can we make in our Research Environments to advance the impact and capacity of Indigenous Research?

This strategy contributes to answering these questions by recommending the development of an Indigenous Research Centre for Western University.

### **ABOUT THE SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Indigenous Research Sub-Committee (See Appendix D for membership) was tasked with the responsibility of drafting an Indigenous Research Strategy for Western that is informed by the literature on Indigenous Research, best practices from other institutions, and Western's Indigenous Strategic Plan. From September 2020 through April 2021, the Sub-Committee discussed, documented, consulted and assessed existing internal research-related policies, practices, and programs.

The work of this Sub-Committee builds on and promotes processes of indigenization that have been occurring at Western University for the past two decades, including our new [Strategic Plan](#) (2021), the [Indigenous Strategic Plan](#) (2017), the [Provost's Task Force on the Implementation of the Indigenous Strategic Plan](#) (2018), the Letter of Understanding (2020), and they also respond to the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#) within higher education. In these foundational documents, Indigenous Research has been prioritized as a key direction for Western University.

### **OUR PROCESS OF LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT**

Building from these directions, the Indigenous Research Sub-Committee engaged in a review of the academic literatures of Indigenous Research, and explored best practices and existing policies supporting Indigenous Research at Western and other institutions to identify a set of recommendations that will propel us forward in a productive and responsive way. Our

committee was led by established Indigenous Research principles of respect, reciprocity, relevance, responsibility and relationships.

From January – March 2021, we held eight engagement sessions with various community stakeholders across campus, including: Indigenous and allied scholars and staff (n=28), Indigenous students (n=5), research leaders and administrators (n=9), and graduate education leaders (n=2) (see Appendix C for list of participants). These sessions were chaired by Chantelle Richmond on the Zoom platform.

These meetings revolved around the following questions:

1. Are you, or would you like to be engaged in Indigenous Research?
2. What supports you / prevents you (or those you serve) from doing Indigenous Research?
3. What can Western do to better support you (or those you serve) to do Indigenous Research?
4. What can Western do to better support Indigenous Research as a whole?

## **WHAT WE LEARNED FROM OUR ENGAGEMENT**

Across the different groups we engaged, many more challenges and gaps in supports and resources were identified in the area of Indigenous Research than were areas of strength and opportunity. We begin by highlighting Western's Indigenous Research strength areas before moving into the challenge areas.

### **Western's areas of strength in Indigenous Research**

A consistent finding from our engagement process was the need to support, grow and protect existing Indigenous Research environments at Western. These places provide critically important foundations and leadership from which Western's capacity to support excellence in Indigenous Research will be advanced. Guided by Indigenous philosophies, knowledge and methods, these programs and initiatives provide invaluable mentorship, sense of belonging, funding, and training opportunities for those engaged in Indigenous Research.

#### **1. The Head and Heart Program <https://indigenous.uwo.ca/research/head-heart-program.html>**

The Head & Heart Indigenous Research Fellowship offers Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students at Western University the opportunity to engage in a hands-on research experience from a multitude of disciplines. Rooted in Indigenous pedagogy, the fellowship aims to nurture new Indigenous scholars through research work as well as professional development, which is supported through a weekly co-curricular session that fellows attend as they work through their research projects. In partnership with Indigenous and allied faculty members from all Faculties at Western – Social Science, Education, Arts & Humanities, Information Media Studies, Music, Law, Science, Health Sciences, Engineering, Ivey Business School and the Schulich

School of Medicine & Dentistry – Indigenous students are awarded a fellowship to complete 10 weeks of research on a topic of their interest that will be guided alongside a designated faculty supervisor. The value of this fellowship is \$7,500.00 for undergraduate students and \$9,100.00 for graduate students. Outputs created by students as part of HH live in Scholarship@Western: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/headandheartprogram/>

## **2. Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement (SAGE)**

<https://indigenous.uwo.ca/students/student-life/student-groups/supporting-aboriginal-graduate-enhancement.html>

Established in 2009 by Dr. Brent Debassige in the Faculty of Education, SAGE is a peer-based support network for Indigenous graduate students at Western University aimed at facilitating transition, retention and completion of Indigenous students in graduate studies. SAGE has grown to receive funding and human resourcing support from Western’s Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies, the Indigenous Student Centre and the Office of Indigenous Initiatives.

## **3. The Office of Indigenous Education, Faculty of Education**

<https://www.edu.uwo.ca/indigenous-education/index.html>

The Indigenous (formerly Aboriginal) Education Office was established in the Faculty of Education in 2008 and a Director was appointed that year. In January 2021, a full-time staffing position – Indigenous Program Coordinator – was created to support the Director.

The Office supports and prioritizes Indigenization initiatives outlined in the Faculty of Education’s five-year strategic vision (2018-2023), Western’s Indigenous Strategic Plan (2016), the Provost’s Task Force on the Implementation of Western University’s Indigenous Strategic Plan final report (2018), and the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE) Accord on Indigenous Education (2010). The Director of the Office oversees a modest annual programming budget to support local partnerships and Indigenous student recruitment into research, professional programs and culturally-responsive events, celebrations and guest speakers related to Indigenous research and symposia in the Faculty of Education, at undergraduate and graduate levels.

## **4. Indigenous Mentorship Network <https://imnp.uwo.ca/>**

IMN-Ontario (2017) is a five-year health training program, funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to provide Indigenous scholars and trainees with high quality mentorship, training, and opportunities to engage in Indigenous health and well-being research. Inspired by an Anishinabe concept, Mno Nimkodadding Geegi (translation: “we are all connected”), IMN-Ontario is committed to growing and supporting community-based health and well-being research and training opportunities for Indigenous trainees and researchers in Ontario. The overarching goal of the IMN is to support and grow the next generation of Indigenous health scholars. When we support Indigenous health scholars to serve the research needs and capacities of Ontario’s Indigenous communities, we can advance Indigenous health equity in the province.

Since its inception, IMN-Ontario has provided scholarship support to 38 Indigenous health scholars at the undergraduate, graduate and professional levels, and provides informal mentorship to approximately 150 others through its social media, webinar and other gatherings. Indigenous health research supported by IMN-Ontario extends across Ontario and is conducted with on and off reserve Indigenous communities and organizations.

#### **5. Interdisciplinary Development Initiative (IDI) in Applied Indigenous Scholarship: The Winter School [https://indigenousscholarship.uwo.ca/activities/2018\\_winter\\_school.html](https://indigenousscholarship.uwo.ca/activities/2018_winter_school.html)**

In 2016, Western University's IDI in Applied Indigenous Scholarship developed "The Winter School" in Indigenous Cultural Competency. Building from its long-standing relationships with several Indigenous communities within and surrounding London, Ontario, The Winter School was developed to support Faculty, Staff, Students and Leaders of Western University to learn more about the history and contemporary context and needs of its surrounding Indigenous communities. Since 2016, four Winter Schools have been held, and during that time, 160 students, faculty and staff from Western have met with and learned from several Indigenous community organizations and communities. In summer 2019, interviews with 40 previous learners, teachers and facilitators of The Winter Schools were interviewed about their perceptions of The Winter Schools. Key themes of the interviews demonstrated that The Winter Schools provided important opportunities for learners to see, feel and engage in Indigenous community contexts that provided rich and detailed learning that would not have been possible in the University environment. In the community context, learners were taken on the land, and encouraged to learn with their hearts, through empathy and shared experience. Overarching desire was expressed to see The Winter School continued.

#### **6. The Indigenous Health Lab [www.indigenoushealthlab.uwo.ca](http://www.indigenoushealthlab.uwo.ca)**

The Indigenous Health Lab is located within the Faculty of Social Science at Western University, under the direction of Anishinaabe scholar Dr. Chantelle Richmond. The work of the lab focuses on community-based research projects that enable Indigenous communities to address their environment and health concerns.

#### **7. Canada Research Chairs (Indigenous Research)**

The Canada Research Chairs Program (CRCP) stands at the centre of a national strategy to make Canada one of the world's top countries in research and development. It invests approximately \$295 million per year to attract and retain a diverse cadre of world-class researchers, to reinforce academic research and training excellence in Canadian postsecondary institutions. Chairholders aim to achieve research excellence in engineering and the natural sciences, health sciences, humanities, and social sciences. They improve our depth of knowledge and quality of life, strengthen Canada's international competitiveness, and help train the next generation of highly skilled people through student supervision, teaching, and the coordination with other researchers' work.

In December 2020, Western had 49 active CRCs, with just a single one of these positions held by an Indigenous scholar, Dr. Chantelle Richmond, Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair (Tier II) in Indigenous Health and Environment. In May 2021, Western added a second Indigenous scholar to its CRC complement, Dr. Spy Dénommé-Welch, Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair (Tier II) in Indigenous Arts, Knowledge Systems, and Education.

These two Indigenous CRC's represent <5% of the Western CRC program.

## **8. Academic Appointments – Indigenous Scholarship and Teaching**

Now in the implementation phase of its Indigenous Strategic Plan, Western seeks to increase Indigenous faculty, staff, and student representation alongside the creation of organizational structures and mechanisms that will assist the ongoing engagement of Indigenous peoples. To support these institutional priorities, Western [established] a new Office of Indigenous Initiatives that will include a senior role to the Provost. As Western's top strategic priority toward advancing Indigenous education and scholarship, the University is seeking to fill up to four new full-time Indigenous faculty member hires across any of the following areas: Indigenous studies, Indigenous education, or Indigenous health.

### **9. Office of Indigenous Initiatives (<https://indigenous.uwo.ca/>)**

Western's Office of Indigenous Initiatives and the VP/AVP (Indigenous Initiatives)...leads system-wide change required to advance truth and reconciliation efforts, achieve equitable outcomes for Indigenous Peoples, and implement Western's Indigenous Strategic Plan. The Office [is] committed to building and strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities locally, provincially, nationally and internationally, and fostering an academic environment, where all students, staff, faculty and community members experience the university as a welcoming, supportive, culturally-safe environment in which Indigenous languages, ways of knowing, being and doing are respected and supported.

### **10. Indigenous Student Centre (<https://indigenous.uwo.ca/students/>)**

The Indigenous Student Centre offers culturally-relevant, wholistic and strength-based programs and services geared toward Indigenous students at Western. The ISC priority areas include:

- Indigenous cultural enrichment
- Indigenous student academic and career support
- Indigenous youth and community outreach
- Indigenous orientation and transition
- Indigenization of the student experience

### **11. Indigenous Studies program <https://indigenoustudies.uwo.ca/>**

Indigenous Studies is an interdisciplinary program of study, examining topics relevant to Indigenous peoples' realities. Housed in the Faculty of Social Science, the program provides students with an opportunity to listen, learn, and engage with matters that are important to Indigenous peoples while providing them with the flexibility to combine their program with other undergraduate degrees.

### **Areas of need: Growing the capacity and impact of Indigenous Research**

#### **1. Indigenous Researchers and scholars require increased supports and funding for Indigenous Research, including greater respect for Indigenous ways of knowing and doing community-centred research**

Indigenous scholars defined research as a relational process that they engage in to support community sovereignty in their own matters. It is a process that requires considerable time, commitment, and principled approaches that too often extend into dimensions not considered academic (e.g., during family visits, in evenings, on holiday time). The workload associated with this approach is broader than mainstream conceptualizations and definitions of “research”; it is a relational approach that acknowledges the scholars’ ties to community, ceremony, human and non-human beings, the land, and sometimes even family. Indigenous scholars spoke about how Western and other academic institutions too often capitalize on these ties, without adequately acknowledging the unequal academic workload and community responsibilities tied to this work.

Among the few Indigenous Research Environments and initiatives currently in operation at Western, few receive the internal supports they require to develop, grow and thrive as centres of research excellence. Rather, these Research Environments are supported largely by non-renewable external research grants, and developed mainly through the personal efforts of, and independent research programs held by, Indigenous scholars themselves

Indigenous Research is not a priority area for Western. Moreover, it was consistently noted that Indigenous research is poorly-funded<sup>1</sup> at Western. Too often Indigenous research environments are precariously funded and lack adequate administrative supports to ensure their long-term sustainability. There are no targeted funding calls or supports for Indigenous Research, and no mechanism in place to document Indigenous Research funding and impact. Moreover, Faculty Research Officers do not have adequate knowledge, expertise, or skill to support Indigenous scholars. As such, Indigenous scholars tend to rely on their own networks (e.g., friends, colleagues, former supervisors) for research support that should be provided by the University.

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<sup>1</sup> Total amount of external funding for Indigenous Research (allied and indigenous scholars) is \$14,328,201 from 2011 to 2021 (Q1 of 2021). This represents approximately 1.07% of the awarded funds Western received in the same time frame. Of this \$14M, the funding received by Indigenous Scholars is approximately 31.3%, equalling approximately \$4.5M. Since we do not specifically track Indigenous research nor demographic data, there is a margin of error in these estimations. Indigenous Research funding is predominantly held in the Faculty of Education, Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Social Science and Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry.

These pockets of success demonstrate the impassioned dedication of Indigenous scholars to exert themselves into the University to create spaces of belonging for Indigenous learners and communities, and they form critical examples from which to grow the base of internal and external funding for Indigenous Research at Western. However, the excessive financial, administrative, and emotional burden of responsibility that accompanies these places highlights the critical need for Western to do more.

Finally, Indigenous researchers and scholars shared that there are simply not enough Indigenous faculty at Western to carry the load. Strengthening and growing the capacity of research at Western will require the hiring of more Indigenous scholars. This will also necessitate the creation of a Research Environment that will attract and retain them.

## **2. Indigenous students seek supportive curriculum and places of belonging in Indigenous Research**

Indigenous students, especially those in graduate studies, are hungry for more opportunities to connect with other Indigenous students and Faculty and to find a sense of belonging in their scholarship. Outside of the Indigenous Student Centre, graduate students are especially keen for a physical place (e.g. Indigenous Health Lab and the Office of Indigenous Education room) where they can work as well as feel connected socially and academically. Such a space is also important for emotional and physical well being.

Indigenous Research connections and campus-wide opportunities are not naturally happening, leading to feelings of exclusion and loneliness. Indigenous students reported receiving little support for their scholarly pursuits in Indigenous Research. They require Indigenous specific knowledge and supports for scholarships and other research funding, ethics applications, and courses. Students stated that the culture of Indigenous Research is hard for them to engage in. Aside from their supervisors and other social supports, Indigenous trainees feel marginalized in their various departments and faculties. Among those present, notably positive and affirming experiences were had in the Head and Heart Program. Students wish to see more support for this program.

## **3. Allied scholars seek opportunities to be helpful and relevant in Indigenous Research**

Allied scholars from various departments and faculties informed this work. Their repeated queries included the following: “How can I be helpful?”; “How do I connect?”; “What steps do I take to connect with Indigenous students, faculty, communities?” Allied scholars were adamant that internal Indigenous Research funding should be prioritized for Indigenous scholars. Most have received some form of external (Tri-Council) research funding to carry out their work and most work in community-based environments, some with Indigenous trainees. There was a strong and continual message about the need and desire for a structural mechanism that would support: relationship building with Indigenous peoples and research; introductions to

communities; training and other opportunities for themselves and their students in cultural humility and Indigenous Research.

#### **4. Research leaders seek improved relationships with Indigenous students, faculty and communities**

Associate Deans of Research from all faculties were invited to participate in these sessions.<sup>2</sup> There was a consistent, high level of optimism and enthusiasm for this process and a commitment to doing more to increase opportunities for Indigenous Research as all agreed that Indigenous matters and topics are deserving of more research attention and support. Despite this enthusiasm, there was a consistent narrative of disconnection from Indigenous scholars, students, research and communities, and a desire for a centralized Indigenous office/Indigenous leadership to guide strategic process. Leaders admitted they and their Faculties are generally lacking in familiarity or expertise in connecting with Indigenous peoples, students/communities (with the exception of Science, Medicine, Social Science, Education, wherein there was relatively more to say about their Faculty connections with Indigenous communities). In sum, there was a hopeful desire from ADR's to do more and be engaged in the process moving forward.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

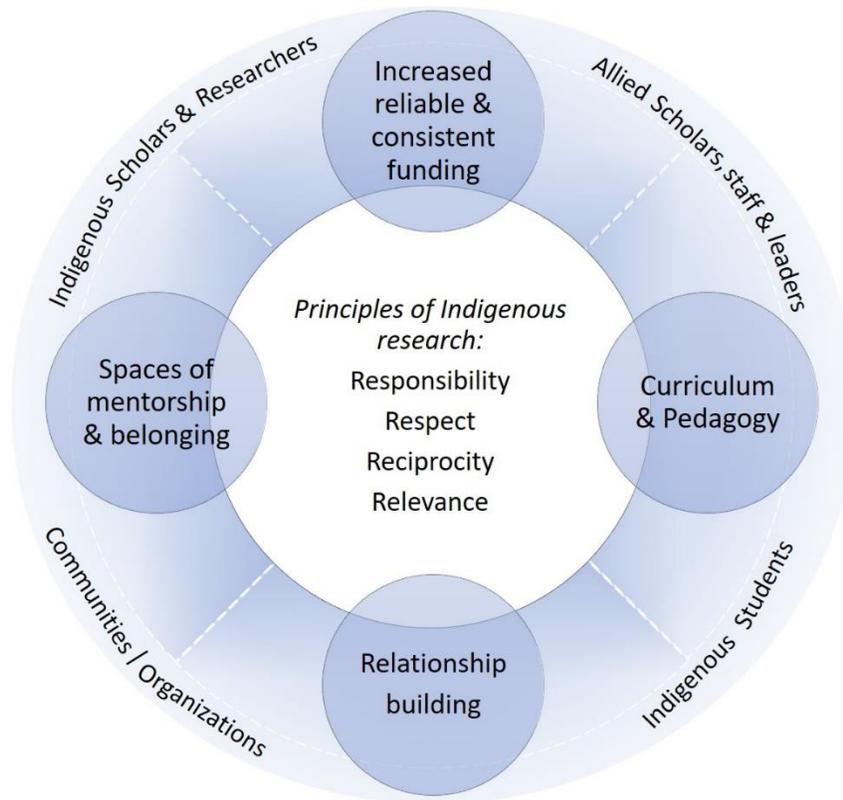
To fulfill the Indigenous Research obligations we committed to in our Indigenous Strategic Plan, now is the time to invest in the people, spaces and curriculum required to improve the capacity and impact of Indigenous Research at Western University.

Indigenous scholars and students require improved funding and access to the culturally appropriate knowledge, supports and infrastructure needed to do high quality research. Western's allied scholars, administrative leadership and support staff demonstrate a strong willingness and desire to participate in and contribute to Indigenous Research, but also recognize the social connections and cultural training required to connect with Indigenous scholars, students and communities in a respectful and relevant way.

Building a successful Indigenous Research environment is a shared responsibility with many distinct but interrelated roles and responsibilities among Indigenous and allied scholars and learners, Indigenous communities and organizations, funders, administrative leaders and support staff. These needs are conceptualised in Figure 1, below.

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<sup>2</sup> Associate Deans of Research from all faculties, with the exception of Ivey, participated in our sessions.



**Figure 1:** Indigenous Research Environment at Western: Principles, Strengths and Users

To improve the capacity and impact of Indigenous Research at Western, **we recommend the creation of an Indigenous Research Centre.** Falling jointly under the administrative and financial commitments and responsibilities of the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and Western Research, the purpose of this Centre will be to support the distinct cultural and shared research needs of Indigenous and allied scholars through interdisciplinary programs of work that directly respond to the following objectives:

- To grow and improve access to reliable and consistent funding opportunities to support Indigenous Research at Western, especially among Indigenous Researchers and scholars;
- To increase capacity to support Indigenous Research through the provision and delivery of curriculum, pedagogy and culturally appropriate, community-based training;
- To increase access to and quality of spaces of mentorship and belonging for Indigenous Researchers, Indigenous students, and allied researchers;
- To develop and grow relationships around Indigenous Research within *and across* the Western community, and with Indigenous communities and organizations to support their research needs and create pathways for Indigenous students.

The objectives of the Indigenous Research Centre could be supported by the following structure, as detailed in Table 1, below. These positions would work collaboratively to develop and nurture relationships across campus and with Indigenous communities to improve the capacity and impact of Indigenous Research at Western.

**Table 1:** Indigenous Research Centre Roles and Responsibilities

<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Examples<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Campus units to collaborate with</b>
<b>Director of Indigenous Research (Leadership)</b>	To build the foundation for an Indigenous Research Centre.  To develop and/or nurture relationships across campus and in community at the senior leadership level.	Support the structure of the IRC, funding/ fundraising (including funding for existing sites of leadership), staffing needs, connection with tri-council and other funders, Research/ Admin, plans for the overall centre, including policies and procedures (e.g. creation of a “Guide for Doing Indigenous Research”  Work with faculties to increase the number of Indigenous researchers at Western  Oversee the evaluation of the IRC objectives (employing Indigenous methods)	OII, Western Research, Faculties
<b>Indigenous Research Officer (Indigenous Scholar support)</b>	To support Indigenous Faculty success across all stages of their research programs.  To develop and/or nurture relationships across campus with faculty and program leads.	Administrative support related to ethics, grant-writing/ review, funding, awards, publication, dissemination and other knowledge mobilization and communications.	OII, Western Research, Faculties
<b>Allied Scholars Research Officer (Allied scholars/ staff)</b>	To support allied scholars, staff and administration with the tools, training and cultural humility needed to create respectful and lasting relationships with Indigenous communities to conduct impactful research.	Continuation of the Winter School; course for allied trainees (U/G and Grad); ethics/ principles of Indigenous Research, book / lunch clubs, social media, fact-sheets, community visits, Research days	OII, Western Research, Centre for Teaching and Learning, Faculties

<sup>3</sup> The examples described above are not exhaustive, rather they are included to reflect some of the existing needs for support identified in our consultation process. We anticipate that staff responsibilities will evolve and grow over time to respond to the needs of Indigenous research.

	To develop and/or nurture relationships within and across campus.		
<b>Indigenous Student Research Officer</b>	To support the learning, capacity building, sense of belonging and mentorship of Indigenous students.  To nurture the cultural and emotional wellness and career trajectory of the Indigenous Student Scholar – from undergraduates to graduate studies to post-graduate, and into Faculty positions.	Manage Head and Heart Program,  Create and host Indigenous Research content and courses to support the development of Indigenous Research skills  Support SAGE and IMN	OII, Western research, SGPS
<b>Indigenous Community Research Engagement (Indigenous communities)</b>	To support Indigenous communities with their research needs; connecting/ supporting Indigenous communities to connect with Faculty  To support pathways for primary and secondary school students interested in Indigenous Research.	Create and grow an outreach strategy to connect with local Indigenous communities and organizations (at varying levels, including communities, organizations, schools, and individuals).  Develop and support community-based research internships and placements. Support the creation of MOUs.	OII, Western Research, Faculties
<b>Indigenous Elders</b>	To provide appropriate cultural and community-based leadership on the development and growth of the Indigenous Research Centre	Advise on the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge in all stages of research  Guide Indigenous and allied researcher in community engagement and research  Participation in IRC meetings – Share knowledge and expertise to guide the development and growth of the IRC  Facilitate Indigenous and allied researcher engagement in ceremony and traditional protocols	OII, IPEC

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

To fulfill the Indigenous Research obligations outlined in the Indigenous Strategic Plan, and to increase impact and outputs of Indigenous Research at Western University, there is urgent need

to invest in people, spaces and curriculum. We recommend the creation of an Indigenous Research Centre, to be jointly administered and financially supported by the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and Research Western.

Indigenous scholars and students require improved funding and access to the culturally appropriate knowledge, supports and infrastructure needed to do high quality research, much of which is based on the needs and desires of their Indigenous community partners. Western's allied scholars, administrative leadership and support staff demonstrate a strong willingness and desire to participate in and contribute to Indigenous Research, but also recognize the social connections and cultural training required to connect with Indigenous scholars, students, and communities in a respectful and relevant way. Above all, Indigenous communities, in our region and across Turtle Island and beyond, continue every day to face inequities and other matters that Western researchers could contribute to solving if the appropriate relationships existed. The work laid out in the Report will take time and it will require investments in people, places, and relationship.

In closing we return to the strawberry. Much can be learned when we look to the natural world for guidance in addressing the complexity of human systems. Despite the beauty and simplicity of the strawberry fruit, below the surface, its wellness relies on a complicated system of roots, veins and shoots. Each component of the strawberry plant plays an important function to ensure its growth through processes that support distribution of proper nutrients, drainage, access to sunlight, and protection from pests. Thus, what we see above the surface is the abundant outcome from an intimate, balanced, and well-resourced relationship between the strawberry plant and its whole environment.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Definition of Key Terms

**Indigenous Research** refers to research in any field or discipline that is conducted by, grounded in or engaged with First Nations, Inuit, Métis or other Indigenous nations, communities, societies or individuals, and their wisdom, cultures, experiences or knowledge systems, as expressed in their dynamic forms, past and present. **Indigenous Research** can embrace the intellectual, physical, emotional and/or spiritual dimensions of knowledge in creative and interconnected relationships with people, places and the natural environment. **Indigenous Research** occurs by and with Indigenous peoples and communities emphasizes and values their existing strengths, assets and knowledge systems. Whatever the methodologies or perspectives that apply in a given context, researchers who conduct Indigenous Research, whether they are Indigenous or non-Indigenous themselves, commit to respectful relationships with all Indigenous peoples and communities.

**Indigenous Community** – can refer to a geographic community of Indigenous People (e.g., First Nation community), an organization (e.g., Friendship Centre or National organization) or other group and/or community of Indigenous peoples (e.g., Residential School Survivors).

**Indigenous Scholar** – a scholar who identifies as an Indigenous person and is a recognized member of an Indigenous community through their contributions and service to that community and/or through lived experience in that community. An Indigenous scholar may also refer to an Indigenous person who engages in scholarly research with Indigenous communities for the purposes of improving Indigenous wellness and self-determination.

An **Allied Scholar** is a non-Indigenous scholar who engages in research *with* and *for* Indigenous people and/or communities in a spirit of reciprocity, respect, relevance and reciprocity. An allied scholar seeks to learn about and understand the colonial history embedded in research and institutions of higher education, and in approaching Indigenous communities, will be led by the question: “How can I be helpful?” An allied scholar will leverage their privilege, power, position to support Indigenous students, faculty and communities, to share resources, capacities, space. The goal of allied scholarship is to create and support data, structures, conditions and /or policies that promote the wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples.

**Community-based Participatory Research** - A partnership-based approach to research that equitably involves community members, organizational representatives, researchers, and others in all aspects of the research process, with all partners in the process contributing expertise and sharing in the decision-making and ownership.

**Indigenous Self-determination in Research** – The ability of Indigenous Peoples to independently determine how they will engage in and contribute to research, in all stages of research. Self-determination means that Indigenous people have full control over their participation in research, and especially in the way that research is used.

## Appendix B: References Cited in this Report

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## Appendix C: Community Engagement Sessions

### Community Gathering 1: Indigenous & Allied Faculty and Staff (January 13, 2021) (n=17)

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Danielle Alcock, Schulich School of Medicine  
– Indigenous Leader in Residence

Rebekah Jacques, Pathology and Laboratory  
Medicine – Assistant Professor

Diana Lewis, Department of Geography and  
Environment – Assistant Professor

Joanne Patterson, Western Libraries – Head  
of Research and Scholarly Communication

Amanda Myers, Indigenous Student Centre  
- Director

Perry Klein, Faculty of Education – Associate  
Dean, Research

Tania Granadillo, Anthropology – Associate  
Professor

Mariam Hayward, Western Research –  
Knowledge Exchange and Impact Manager

Paula Hedgepeth, Indigenous Initiatives –  
Indigenous Program Coordinator

Heather Martin, Western Research – Senior  
Contracts Officer

Nicole Kaniki, Western Research – Research  
Development Consultant; Special Advisor  
on Anti-Racism

Katie Big-Canoe, Indigenous Mentorship  
Network – Program Coordinator

Erin Huner, Ivey Business School – Director  
of Culture & Inclusion

Sara Mai Chitty, Office of Indigenous  
Initiatives – Curriculum and Pedagogy  
Advisor

Jody Noah, Southern First Nations  
Secretariat – Post-Secondary Manager

Erica Neeganagwedgin, Faculty of Education  
– Assistant Professor

Paul Porter, Indigenous Undergraduate  
student

### Community Gathering 2: Indigenous & Allied Scholars of Western (February 18, 2021)

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(n=11)

Isaac Luginaah, Geography and  
Environment - Professor

Spy Denomme-Welch, Education, Assistant  
Professor and Canada Research Chair

David Kanatawakhon-Maracle, Indigenous  
Studies - Lecturer

Karen Pennesi, Anthropology – Associate  
Professor

Desmond Moser, Earth Sciences – Professor

Peter Timmins, Anthropology – Assistant  
Professor

Treena Orchard, School of Health Studies –  
Associate Professor

Abram Oudshoorn, School of Nursing –  
Assistant Professor

Lloy Wylie, Schulich Interfaculty Program –  
Assistant Professor

Janice Forsyth, Indigenous Studies –  
Director; Sociology – Associate Professor

Pauline Wakeham, English and Writing  
Studies – Associate Professor

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### **Community Gathering 3: Indigenous Students (March 5, 2021) (n=5)**

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Riley Kennedy, Indigenous Studies and Community Development – Undergraduate Studies, 3<sup>rd</sup> year

Jennifer Komorowski, Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism – Graduate Studies, 4<sup>th</sup> year

Sam Kennedy, Psychology – Undergraduate Studies, 2<sup>nd</sup> year

Serena Mendizabal, Geography and Environment – Graduate Studies, 1<sup>st</sup> year

Zeeta Lazore-Cayuga, Aboriginal Education Leadership – Graduate Studies, 2<sup>nd</sup> year

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### **Community Engagement 4, 5, 6: Western Research – Faculty (n=11)**

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Janis Cardy, Faculty of Health Sciences – Associate Dean, Research

Miriam Capretz, Faculty of Engineering – Associate Dean, Research

Sandy Smeltzer, Faculty of Information & Media Studies – Associate Dean, Research

Bobby Glushko, Associate Chief Librarian

Marc Joanisse, Faculty of Social Sciences - Associate Dean, Research

Andrew Botterell, Faculty of Law - Associate Dean, Research

David Litchfield, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry – Associate Dean, Research

Nandi Bhatia, Faculty of Arts and Humanities - Associate Dean, Research

Bryan Neff, Faculty of Science - Associate Dean, Research

Lorraine Davies, School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies – Associate Vice-Provost

Emily Ansari, Don Wright Faculty of Music - Associate Dean, Research

Linda Miller, School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies – Vice-Provost

## Appendix D: Indigenous Research Sub-Committee Membership

Membership of the Indigenous Research Sub-Committee includes:

[Chantelle Richmond](#) (Chair), Associate Professor/ Canada Research Chair (Department of Geography, Faculty of Social Science)

[Candace Brunette](#), Acting Vice Provost / Associate Vice President (Indigenous Initiatives)

[Natalie Wu](#), Director, Research Services (Western Research)

[Erika Basile](#), Director, Research Ethics and Compliance (Western Research)

[Kelly Patterson](#), Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Office (Western Research)

[Mariam Hayward](#), Knowledge Exchange and Impact Manager (Western Research)

[Rob Hegele](#), Professor (Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry)

[Brent \[Ahnungoonhs\] Debassige](#), Associate Professor and Director of Indigenous Education, (Faculty of Education)

[Victoria Smye](#), Director, School of Nursing, (Faculty of Health Science)

[Liz Akiwenzie](#), Indigenous Elder, (Oneida Nation and Cape Croker First Nation)

[Beth Tuinstra](#), Indigenous Graduate Student (Faculty of Music)

Monty McGahey II, Indigenous community member and alumni (Chippewas of the Thames First Nation)

The Sub-Committee is supported by two Research Assistants: Victoria Bomberry (MA Candidate, Geography) and Cindy Smithers-Graeme, PhD.

## Appendix E: Shared Principles in Indigenous Research

In the creation of an inclusive and well-supported **Indigenous Research Environment** at Western, we are guided by a set of principles that honour Kirkness and Barnhardt's 4R's (1991): Respect, Responsibility, Reciprocity and Relevance. More recently, Restoule (2018) added a 5<sup>th</sup> R: Relationship.

We commit to creating an **Indigenous Research Environment** that acknowledges and supports Indigenous scholars and communities to be self-determining in their research, including their uptake of **Indigenous Research methodologies**, defined as *"the processes by which a researcher uses her existing knowledge (epistemology) for gathering, analyzing and creating knowledge"* (Wilson, 2001).

We commit to creating an **Indigenous Research Environment** that acknowledges and respects Indigenous Peoples is a way of knowing and understanding the world through a lens of *relationality*; this relational lens refers to the interconnection and responsibility between individuals and their families, communities, nations, wider ecosystems, and ancestors (past and future). On Turtle Island and across the world, the concept of relationality is central to Indigenous understandings of wellness. A relational worldview is foundational to Indigenous identity; it appears in stories and teachings, songs, ceremonies and languages, weaving together elements of the whole person and community toward the goal of living a good life.

With respect to the relational ontology that underpins Indigenous worldview (e.g., interconnection of the physical, social and spiritual), it is imperative that **Indigenous Research Methodologies** be understood to include a range of gatherings and/or other actions by which researchers fulfil their responsibilities and accountabilities to their relations. This may include, but is not limited to, visiting with people, participating in ceremony, and meeting on the land, and entails the culturally relevant protocols (i.e., prayer, feasting, gifting, honoraria) that are appropriate in these relational interactions, and through which knowledge is gathered, analysed and shared. It is acknowledged that these interactions take considerable time and are fundamentally important for establishing the good relationships foundational for collaborating on research. These activities must be adequately funded and otherwise appropriately resourced (in both Western and culturally appropriate means – space, remuneration, time), and the nature of the work undertaken by Indigenous scholars must be appropriately recognized.

## Appendix F: Funding Summary of Existing Indigenous Research Initiatives at Western University

Title	Description	Funding Source	Funding Commitment	Current Funding (Annual)
Head and Heart	A 10-week summer research fellowship for Indigenous students to engage in hands-on research from a multitude of disciplines.	Office of Vice Provost Western Research	Year by year	\$7,500.00 for each undergraduate student \$9,100.00 for each graduate student
Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement	A peer-based support network for Indigenous graduate students.	School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies	Year by year	Approximately \$12,000
Indigenous Scholarships – Faculty of Education	This program strives to foster academic excellence and innovation in Indigenous scholarship and Indigenous research, increase Indigenous student representation in the Faculty of Education's MA and PhD programs, and reduce social and economic barriers that disproportionately hinder Indigenous student access and completion of graduate-level studies.	Faculty of Education	One time	MA - \$10,000 per year for two years + any Faculty-sourced MA funding PhD - \$16,000 per year for five years + Western's guaranteed PhD funding
Ontario Graduate Scholarship	OGS awards are merit-based scholarships available to students in all disciplines of graduate study.  Three OGS awards support Indigenous to Canada – First Nations, Metis and Inuit students	The Province of Ontario (2/3 <sup>rd</sup> of awards) The University of Western (1/3 <sup>rd</sup> of award) through private donation.	Ongoing	\$15,000 (for each of the three Indigenous-specific OGS awards)