



➤ 2017 Community Report ◀

Mount Royal University is located in the traditional territories of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the people of Treaty 7, which includes the Siksika, the Piikani, the Kainai, the Tsuut'ina and the Îyârhe Nakoda. We are situated on land where the Bow River meets the Elbow River, and the traditional Blackfoot name of this place is "Mohkinstsis," which we now call the city of Calgary. The city of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation.

FACING THE PAST

WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE FUTURE

When Mount Royal embarked upon this path of indigenization and decolonization, we, along with Treaty 7 community partners, did so with a genuine desire to acknowledge the deep divisions between Indigenous Peoples and settler Canadians and to fulfill our duty as a post-secondary institution to be an agent of change.

I am proud of what Mount Royal does to acknowledge the hereditary land upon which we sit, to grace our campus with Indigenous art and cultural symbols, to expand our curriculum, to support students, to welcome elders and teachers to our campus in respectful ways, and to be taught and guided by them. In this report, you will read about what we have accomplished together with community partners.

More importantly, however, I am humbled by how much we have yet to learn.

Good intentions and small acts, however sincere, will alone never accomplish what we've committed to do. Decolonization must be felt and lived deeply. The blunt truth of our colonial past and ongoing injustices is a heavy weight, and until we turn to it and face it, until we admit to its many tolls and implications, we are shackled to it. Truth precedes reconciliation.

As many individuals working together, including students, faculty and staff, and others beyond our University, we will not always agree on how or at what pace to proceed. But we must commit to reconciliation at all turns if we are to live up to the promise and expectations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the promises we ourselves have made.

I am optimistic that given the unique opportunity universities have to address the educational inequities of the past, Mount Royal will show leadership on the path to rebuilding relationships. We will do this on a foundation of inter-cultural trust.

Despite our progress, we stumble and sometimes hold stubbornly to conventional academic and institutional practices. Change is sometimes gradual as we wrestle with unbinding ourselves from established structures and ideas, and step into new territory in which we are not experts. For a university, this is difficult, unsettling and uncomfortable — but that is the domain of change.

We ask for continued guidance from community partners as we move forward, and we commit to a future together that fosters cross-cultural collaboration.



Lesley Brown
Provost and Vice-President, Academic
Mount Royal University

SETTING OUT THE COURSE

Mount Royal's Indigenous Strategic Plan was developed to commit the University to a course of action to indigenize our campus, to respect and embrace Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, to integrate Indigenous teachings and practices and to honour Indigenous experiences and identities.

This plan was developed with guidance from an external advisory committee of local Indigenous leaders and experts in education, and with insight from the Mount Royal community, to ensure it would meet the needs of all students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, while outlining a vision for the future of our University.

We began implementing our plan more than a year ago, and this report highlights progress towards delivering on the five goals we set. A sampling of our key achievements in 2016/17 includes:

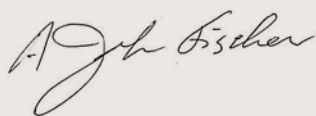
- the ceremonial blessing of a tipi
- the appointment of a new Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Studies
- a field school developed and delivered in full partnership with the Îyârhe Nakoda
- creation of a new Office of Academic Indigenization and appointment of its inaugural co-directors
- support for students through the Iniskim Centre and the Aboriginal Education Program.

This progress was possible because of the enthusiastic support of our students, faculty, staff and administration. We would especially like to thank those who sat on the advisory committee, the elders who worked with the professional learning community and with the field schools, and those elders and knowledge holders who support student learning daily as they speak in classes.

As we move through the work of delivering on our goals in the plan, we continue to be guided by a commitment to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, to mutual learning and growth, to acting ethically and to valuing partnerships.

While we honour our achievements, our eye is on the future and all that remains to be done. Our focus is students, whom we aim to influence profoundly and positively in at least three ways. First, by increasing the number of Indigenous students on campus. Second, by ensuring not only their success but their excellence here. And third, by enabling all Mount Royal students to graduate with a deepened understanding and appreciation of Indigenous Peoples and their histories.

These are our aims. Our Indigenous Strategic Plan is an ambitious map setting out the course we must follow to improve intercultural relations and do our part to address significant educational inequities that have existed for too long.



John Fischer
Director, Iniskim Centre
Co-chair, Indigenous Strategic Plan
Implementation and Monitoring Committee



Jim Zimmer
Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President,
Teaching and Learning
Co-chair, Indigenous Strategic Plan
Implementation and Monitoring Committee

GOAL 1

INDIGENIZING MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY

Cultivate respectful and welcoming environments that prevail over the legacy of colonization



Among the ways Mount Royal altered its environment in 2016/17 to be more respectful was the ceremonial blessing of a new tipi.

A new tipi belonging to Mount Royal received a ceremonial blessing in January 2017 as the University acknowledged its symbolic and cultural significance as a traditional lodge. The raising of a tipi on campus symbolizes both the strength of Indigenous Peoples and communities, as well as Mount Royal's commitment to supporting the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge and culture — particularly within education.

The Honourable Dr. Carolyn Bennett, federal Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, joined Mount Royal community members on the front lawn of the University where the tipi was set up. Minister Bennett received the Blackfoot name of "Aaksistowaki," meaning courageous woman, from Elder Miiksika'am (Clarence Wolfleg Sr.).

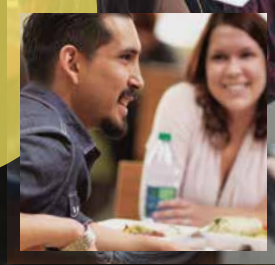
Elder Miiksika'am began the event with a smudging ceremony, using the smoke from sweetgrass to cleanse the space. He then led a prayer to strengthen the connection between the Blackfoot-style tipi and its place on campus.

Following the ceremony, guests were offered Saskatoon berry soup, in keeping with the tradition of sharing a meal during the dedication of a home. Mount Royal student Darcy Turning Robe of the Siksika Nation drummed the Honour Song, and a round dance was held.

GOAL 2

CULTURALLY RESPECTFUL INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

Foster respect for Indigenous ways of knowing and knowledge-production to increase capacity for Indigenous scholarship



An example of progress towards this goal in 2016/17 was the appointment of a new research chair.

Tracy Friedel, PhD, joined Mount Royal University on July 1, 2017 as the University's first Canada Research Chair (CRC) in Indigenous Studies, focusing on culture, environment and sustainability. The five-year, \$500,000 award was approved by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, which judges all nominations for research chairs in Canada.

The CRC program was established by the Government of Canada to enable Canadian universities to foster research excellence and enhance their role as world-class centres of research in the global and knowledge-based economy. Successful candidates are considered exceptional emerging researchers acknowledged by their peers as having the potential to lead in their field.

Friedel is a descendant of the nêhiyawêwin (Cree)-speaking Métis people of Mânitow Sâkahikanihk (Lac Ste. Anne) in west-central Alberta. She is focusing on research in Indigenous land-based learning, teaching courses that centre on Indigenous-focused inquiry and epistemology, and contributing to the creation and delivery of an Indigenous Studies major and an Environmental Humanities major.

GOAL 3

BRIDGE-BUILDING WITH INDIGENOUS EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS

Building strong connections by forging mutually supportive and productive partnerships with all stakeholders in Indigenous education

One outcome of the relationships that have been built with Indigenous stakeholders was a new field school co-developed and co-facilitated by a Îyârhe Nakoda community member and a Mount Royal faculty member in spring 2017.

The field school in the mountains last spring is being held up as the best model to date of delivering Indigenous-centred curriculum in partnership with Indigenous stakeholders. In a new third-year course, Environmental Reconciliation and Indigenous Studies, 16 senior students went to the Îyârhe (Stoney) Nakoda first nation in Morley, Alberta for a week-long immersive learning experience in May 2017.

The course explored ways of reconciling relations and environmental issues between Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians and how culture influences a person's relationship to the land. Developed and delivered in full partnership with the Îyârhe Nakoda, the course was co-facilitated by community member Thomas Snow and faculty member Sarah Brown.

The success of the field school was attributed to a year-long commitment between Brown and the community. A number of community members were involved in delivering different sections of the course. Students spent many hours with community members, learning from elders and visiting people in their homes. They participated in healing circles, sweat lodges, a pipe ceremony and a 24-hour wilderness solo experience, which included fasting and sleeping outside under only a tarp.

On the final night, students hosted a feast for the community attended by about 70 people. The field school is serving as a model within Mount Royal for future courses.

GOAL 4

SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS LEARNERS

Work with our communities to enhance the academic, personal and cultural experience of Indigenous learners



Supporting Indigenous learners to help them excel at Mount Royal is a year-round goal, highlighted last year with the celebration of important anniversaries on campus.

An anniversary ceremony to celebrate the success of the Iniskim Centre over the past decade was held in March 2017. Dozens of supporters packed the University's main corridor to hear speeches, share stories and enjoy bannock, stew and cake.

Elder Miiksika'am of the Siksika Nation led the opening blessing while the Turning Robe Singers of the Siksika Nation performed the Flag Song with their distinct style of Blackfoot drumming. Medicine Trail (Naato'ohsokoy) Program coordinator Dion Simon of Maskwacis recognized the many elders who made significant contributions to Indigenous education at Mount Royal over the past decade and beyond.

Ten years ago Andrew Weasel Fat of the Kainai Nation led a pipe ceremony to ask for strength and perseverance for the newly named Iniskim Centre. Following the ceremony in 2007, a 60-person procession of dignitaries — including the Chiefs for each of the Treaty 7 Nations, leaders from the Métis Nation of Alberta Region 3 and the late Alberta premier Ralph Klein — formed a grand entry.

Before the official opening in 2007, Mount Royal held a naming contest for the centre, with the hope students would find a name meaningful for them. Rory Loftus of the Siksika Nation submitted his entry and won the contest. Respecting protocol, the University sought and received permission to use this particular name from a group of Blackfoot elders, including Frank Weasel Head of the Kainai Nation, and Weasel Fat and Leonard Bastien of the Piikani Nation.

The word Iniskim means "Buffalo Calling Stone," and the stone holds special meaning to the Blackfoot People. It stems from a traditional Blackfoot story about how the Iniskim stone told Weasel Woman to perform a ceremony that would call the buffalo to provide for the people.



The name represents the sense of community that can be found within the centre's walls every day as students, faculty and staff access programs and services.

Under the Strategic Plan 2025, Mount Royal plans to increase Indigenous enrolment to seven per cent of its student body — all while adding thousands of full-time learners. As Indigenous representation continues to climb, so does the range of activities and supports that provide a more exceptional undergraduate educational experience for Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners alike.

The Aboriginal Education Program (AEP), which is a post-secondary preparation program for students of Indigenous ancestry, turns 25 in 2018.

In January 1993, the Aboriginal Education "Project" — as it was known then — began offering classes to students. This project was created in response to calls for a transitional program from the urban Indigenous community and organizations such as the Calgary Aboriginal Friendship Centre, the Calgary Urban Affairs Committee and, in time, the Calgary Aboriginal Education Society. The intention was to create a program for students to receive post-secondary credentials for child studies and social work while learning in a culturally supportive environment.

In the last academic year, 78 registered students made up the largest cohort in the history of the program. Participants take university credit and non-credit courses, and plan to pursue higher education. About half of AEP students applied to a credit program at Mount Royal for entry in the fall of 2017.

The first specialized space for Indigenous students at Mount Royal was the Native Student Centre in Wyckham House, which opened in 1998. The centre has brought in speakers and hosted concerts and conferences, as well as round dances and powwows.

GOAL 5

RESPECTFUL AND INCLUSIVE CURRICULA AND PEDAGOGIES

Promoting culturally responsible and respectful curricula that integrates Indigenous pedagogies and ways of knowing



An example of leadership in fulfilling this goal was the establishment of the Office of Academic Indigenization.

Dr. Renae Watchman and Dr. Liam Haggarty were named co-directors of the new Office of Academic Indigenization in August 2017.

Renae is a tenured Associate Professor currently cross-appointed to the Departments of English, Languages, and Cultures and Humanities (Indigenous Studies). Renae is from the Diné (Navajo) Nation and is Bitter Water, born for the Towering House clan. She is originally from Shiprock, New Mexico and has been at Mount Royal since 2010. Renae earned her PhD in German Studies jointly with the Program in Humanities at Stanford University in 2007. Her current research focuses on her hometown monolith, Tsé Bit'a'í and the erasure of Navajo stories as depicted in visual media. She teaches courses in North American Indigenous literatures and Indigenous Film Studies. Renae was an important contributor to the development of Mount Royal's Indigenous Strategic Plan, and has been much involved in the implementation of its recommendations to date.

Liam is a tenured Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities, to which he was appointed in 2011. He holds a PhD in History from the University of Saskatchewan. Liam was also a key contributor to the development of the Indigenous Strategic Plan and has been substantially involved in its implementation to date. For two years, Liam was seconded to the Office of the Associate Vice-President, Teaching and Learning, to lead and coordinate the early implementation of academic recommendations in the Indigenous Strategic Plan. He has facilitated numerous faculty professional development events, co-led Faculty Learning Communities on Indigenization and co-chaired the university-wide Academic Indigenization Advisory Committee.

As co-directors of the Office of Academic Indigenization, Renae and Liam will, over the next several years, lead the implementation of the academic recommendations in the Indigenous Strategic Plan. This will include professional development for all Mount Royal faculty, indigenization of curriculum and creation of academic pathways into MRU. They will undertake this work in consultation and collaboration with faculty members, chairs and deans across the University, the Iniskim Centre, Indigenous communities of Treaty 7 and other stakeholders within and external to Mount Royal University.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Increase the percentage of employees (faculty, staff and administration) who identify being of Aboriginal or Indigenous ancestry of Canada (e.g., First Nations, Inuit, Métis).

Baseline: 2016/2017

4.28%

Increase the percentage of self-identified Aboriginal or Indigenous employees who agree with the statement **“at my organization, I am treated fairly and with respect.”**

Baseline: 2016/2017

73.53%

Increase the number of tipi set-ups and teaching sessions per academic year.

Baseline: 2015/2016

4

2016/17

15

Increase the proportion of qualified self-identified Indigenous student applicants for credit-term programs.

Baseline: 2015/2016

74.9%

2016/17

76.4%

Increase the proportion of self-identified Indigenous students who register in credit-term programs, of those who were accepted.

Baseline: 2015/2016

59.3%

2016/17

62.4%

Increase the overall proportion of self-identified Indigenous students who attend Mount Royal University.

Baseline: 2015/2016

5.2%

2016/17

5.3%

Maintain the retention rate of self-identified Indigenous students from first to second year in degree programs at a level proportionate to non-Indigenous students.

Baseline: Fall 2015

Indigenous: 83.0%

Non-Indigenous: 82.5%

Maintain the percentage of self-identified Indigenous students' agreement with the statement **"I feel as if I belong at this university,"** at a level that is comparable to non-Indigenous students.

Baseline	Updates
2015/16 First-year students: Indigenous: 92.9% Non-Indigenous: 91.7%	Available 2019
2013/14 Middle-years students: Indigenous: 85.1% Non-Indigenous: 86.5%	2016/17 Middle-years students: Indigenous: 87.7% Non-Indigenous: 89.2%
2014/15 Graduating students: Indigenous: 92.0% Non-Indigenous: 84.5%	Available 2018

Increase the percentage of self-identified Indigenous students who say their experience at MRU has contributed to their growth and development in their ***self-confidence and spirituality***.

Baseline	Updates
<i>Self-confidence</i> (% much/very much) 2013/14 Middle-years students: 66.0% 2014/15 Graduating students: 76.0%	2016/17 Middle-years students: 50.9% Available 2018
<i>Spirituality</i> (% much/very much) 2013/14 Middle-years students: 23.4% 2014/15 Graduating students: 24.0%	2016/17 Middle-years students: 29.8% Available 2018

At community events co-hosted by the Iniskim Centre, increase the number of participants per event, averaged across all events.

Baseline: 2015/2016	2016/17
230	252

At Indigenous sessions and workshops hosted on campus each academic year, increase the number of cross-campus participants per event, averaged across all events.

Baseline: 2015/2016	2016/17
102	143

At events for Indigenous high school students during the academic year (e.g., recruitment fair, tours, science talk, MEG energy camp and Maskwacis camps), increase the number of participants per event, averaged across all events.

Baseline: 2015/2016	2016/17
60	85

Self-identified Indigenous senior students participate in at least one high-impact practice comparable with the percentage of non-Indigenous students.

Baseline: 2015/2016	2016/17
Indigenous: 75.0% Non-Indigenous: 87.1%	Indigenous: 76.0% Non-Indigenous: 84.3%

Increase the number of Indigenous field schools available to all credit students.

Baseline: 2015/2016	2016/17
1	2

Maintain the proportion of Aboriginal Education Program graduates who enrol in a Mount Royal credit program the next academic year.

Baseline: 2015/2016	2016/17
75.0%	92.9%

