

MOVING FORWARD IN A GOOD WAY

Werklund School of Education Indigenous Education Task Force Recommendations and Report

March 2015

Recommendations to the Werklund School of Education

The Task Force was charged with the following mandate, “to prepare recommendations to the Werklund School of Education on our own future development with regard to Indigenous Education, and also to recommend how we might productively align with, support, partner with and/or lead outside the School in areas/activities related to Indigenous Education.” And so it is in the spirit that we offer these recommendations to the Werklund School of Education.

Recommendation 1: Engage in open and extended conversations of contemporary Indigenous aims, issues, and contexts in relation to the Werklund School of Education. The focus here is on openly engaging with the tensions that arise from attempting to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into the Werklund School of Education. The aim is to create and sustain respectful and welcoming learning environments that instil a sense of belonging for all learners and will in time assist in creating a *habitus* of mutual respect. As Bourdieu (1992) elaborates, the notion of *habitus* is dependent on history and human memory. This culture will encompass the various historical and contemporary phenomena and experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff and students who comprise the Werklund School of Education.

Recommendation 2: Ensure that traditional knowledge and stories are valued and shared within the Werklund School of Education.

Narratives, stories, and storytelling are significant in building a communal culture and in understanding contemporary Indigenous

contexts (Compton-Lilly & Halverson, 2014). An advantage here is that scholars within the Werklund School of Education have considerable experience employing literacy approaches to systematically recover and reinstate cultural narratives, traditional knowledge, and Aboriginal worldviews (Poitras Pratt, 2011; Daniels, 2013). Drawing upon this previous research, a detailed plan of activities can be outlined to enable conversations and space sharing.

Recommendation 3: Critically examine how research methods and educational theories are being taught and practiced within the Werklund School of Education, and articulate and discuss assumptions about the role of Aboriginal knowledges, epistemologies, and methods in the production of knowledge within the Werklund School of Education (Simmons & Christopher, 2013; Medin & Bang, 2014). Such discussions and following actions would enable the Werklund School of Education community to further develop signature pedagogies and programs.

Recommendation 4: Critically examine the current and future courses within the undergraduate and graduate programs to ensure that each course is designed as a networked, patterned, living field of knowledge that is bounded generously so to encompass Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. This orientation to curriculum represents a departure from many current policies, structures, and practices created to maintain and sustain 20th century education. Many researchers have led the way towards envisioning a curriculum in which all people belong. Such curriculum work involves “learning the landscape.” A review of course offerings in the undergraduate and graduate courses is required, including EDUC 530, EDER 619.70, EDER 603.30, and EDER 603.31 to ensure they are creating ‘ethical relationality’ which involves an “ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to more deeply understand how our different histories and position us in relation to each other” (Donald, 2012, p.45).

Recommendation 5: Establish community partnerships with Indigenous communities to ensure that Indigenous students registered in the Community-based Bachelor of Education Program are fully supported in achieving success. As students will reside within their home communities, coming to campus for just two weeks in the summer months, it is imperative that support structures be put in place in the communities and also within the Werklund School of Education. The matter of what will be taken to constitute educational success must thus be undertaken. Courses, grades, and official credentials will no doubt constitute part of the response, but the bigger issue of quality of life—this is, quality of individual lives and community living—must remain paramount.

Indigenous community partnerships can also lead to the development and review of School-community collaboration of Aboriginal education, research, and leadership policies and curricula. Such collaboration also has the potential to develop capacity for knowledge and understanding for each stakeholder about the key areas and various perspectives in the process.

Recommendation 6: Create a series of research-focused community conversations across the province, inviting in Aboriginal community members, industry and other interested stakeholders that focus on various historical and contemporary phenomena and experiences of Aboriginal communities. These events could constitute a continuation of the *Kindling Conversations* series.

Recommendation 7: As an advocate and leader, listen to the educational needs of Aboriginal communities and work collaboratively with these communities to respond to their community-identified needs.

Recommendation 8: Collaborate with the various Indigenous initiatives across campus to ensure that initiatives are specialized, sustained and systemic.

Recommendation 9: Collaborate with select teacher education

programs across western Canada, and beyond, on targeted initiatives with specialized programming.

Recommendation 10: Create an implementation committee to lead the recommendations contained in this report.