



# Aboriginal Council of Queen's University

## 2014 Annual Report

March 2015

The Aboriginal Council of Queen's University (ACQU) provides advice to the university and is mandated to be involved in all decisions affecting Aboriginal programs and services at Queen's. It normally meets three times per year. This report summarizes and highlights the Council's activities in the 2014 calendar year.

The Council's [website](#) includes information about the Council's mandate, [membership](#) and activities, including [meeting summaries](#).

There were three meetings of Council in 2014. What follows are highlights from these meetings.

### **February 26, 2014 Aboriginal Caucus and Council meeting**

- The Council's Aboriginal Caucus, led by Council Co-Chair Marlene Brant Castellano, met prior to the full Council meeting. Co-Chair Brant Castellano noted the discussion focused on the pivotal role of Council members in advising the university on financial and academic matters. She commented on the explosion of activity and creativity that is bolstering increased engagement and support for Aboriginal student activities – more than could have been anticipated when the renewed Council was formed two years ago.
- ACQU member Robert Rittwage, the Council's representative on the university's Employment Equity Committee, provided a report on that committee's work.
- Dr. Anne Godlewska (Geography) made a presentation to Council on her ongoing Aboriginal Assessment and Awareness project. Council passed a motion affirming its continued support for this project and referred a request from Dr. Godlewska for input to the Knowledge and Curriculum Working Group.
- On behalf of the Provost, Dr. Jill Scott, Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning, updated Council on the successful recruitment of two new Aboriginal faculty members. Queen's National Scholar Dr. Armand Ruffo will arrive in Summer 2014, and an announcement is pending of a Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Studies.
- Dr. Arig al Shaibah, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs (Student Life and Learning), and Ms. Rebecca Benson, a graduate student, presented to Council on the Aboriginal cohort of the new Q Success program, launched in Fall 2014. Q Success is a transition support program, generously funded by an anonymous donor. Ms. Benson was the Aboriginal peer mentor for the cohort, and she spoke of how important the program was to the first-year participants as they worked through topics with an Aboriginal lens, for example, using a medicine wheel instead of a chart, for planning.

- Reports were provided to Council from the following groups and Aboriginal-focused academic programs:
  - Council's three working groups;
  - Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre (Four Directions);
  - Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement (SAGE);
  - Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP), Faculty of Education;
  - Master of Education in Aboriginal and world Indigenous Education Studies (AWIES), Faculty of Education;
  - Aboriginal Access to Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science;
  - Indigenous Policy and Governance Initiative, Professional Master of Public Administration (PMPA), School of Policy Studies.
  
- A new graduate program in the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, [NSERC CREATE SERA, Sustainable Engineering in Remote Areas](#), will begin providing Council with regular updates on its activities.
  
- Council discussed the outcomes of a meeting held on campus in January 2014 with a representative of the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the university's Aboriginal programs and service units. The meeting provided clarity on the province's evolving purpose for its Student Success Fund (SSF): the fund supports student supports, and not academic program operations. As a result, units reallocated their SSF monies to focus on the fund's mandate. The co-chairs commended unit directors for their work in reallocating their SSF budgets for years two and three of the current three-year funding cycle (2013-16) in response to the ministry direction received. Council members suggested that Queen's needs to report to the province in a more integrated way, in particular in demonstrating collaborative efforts, inter and intra university.
  
- Council discussed the issue of how Bands can best access annual tuition and fee information as soon as it is set by the university. Timely communication allows Bands to plan, make decisions and potentially provide more support to more students. Council's Access and Support Working Group will develop strategies to support timely communications to Bands as part of its work in 2014.
  
- [Full meeting notes](#) are posted to the ACQU website.

#### **April 14, 2014 Aboriginal Caucus and Council meeting**

- The Council's Aboriginal Caucus, led by Council Co-Chair Marlene Brant Castellano, met prior to the full Council meeting.

- Council received a presentation on the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science's Aboriginal Access to Engineering (AAE) from Director Melanie Howard and students Oke Maracle, B. Sc.'15 (Civil Engineering) and Nickoli Parcher, B.Sc. (Mining Engineering). The presentation focused on student involvement in special projects, including the design of a to-scale paper-engineered war canoe for use by the AAE Outreach program. Melanie, Oke and Nick also spoke about Queen's attendance at the American Indian Science and Engineering Society's Leadership Summit in Albuquerque, New Mexico in March 2014 that provided networking and leadership skill-building opportunities, and a cultural exchange for students from across North America.
- Council received reports from Council's three working groups, Four Directions, SAGE, the Queen's Native Students Association (QNSA), and the Aboriginal-focused programs in the faculties of Education (ATEP and AWIES), Engineering and Applied Science (AAE and SERA), and the School of Policy Studies (PMPA).
- Council was asked to provide comments on the annual SSF report to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Council also reviewed the university's SSF Financial Report and provided input.
- Council's nominating committee reported on expiring appointments, re-appointments and proposals for new community representatives/organizations, as needed. As requested by the Aboriginal Caucus, the committee will discuss having a more fluid description of student representation on Council to respond to an increasing number of Aboriginal student organizations on campus. The committee will also explore opportunities for Council to connect with ATEP community-based sites/advisory committees. Council authorized the committee to proceed with 'filling the gaps' in membership.
- [Full meeting notes](#) are available on the council's website.

#### **October 15, 2014 Aboriginal Caucus and Council meeting**

- The Council's Aboriginal Caucus, led by Council Co-Chair Marlene Brant Castellano, met prior to the full Council meeting.
- Co-Chair Davis welcomed all members, new and returning, for the 2014-15 year. Members were encouraged to join the working groups. Co-Chair Brant Castellano emphasized the role of Aboriginal Caucus members in ensuring there are Aboriginal voices in decision-making, both with regard to academic programming and support services. The Co-Chairs outlined plans for a 'revisioning exercise' at Council's first

meeting in 2015 to provide an opportunity for members to identify priority areas in Council's four policy domains: Access, Climate, Curriculum, and Capacity.

- Dr. Armand Ruffo, Queen's National Scholar (QNS) in Indigenous Literatures and Languages, was welcomed to Council. Council also noted the arrival to Queen's of Dr. Norman Vorano, a QNS in Indigenous Visual Arts of the Americas. In January 2015, Queen's will welcome Dr. Dylan Robinson, Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Arts.
- Reports were received from Council's three working groups, Four Directions, SAGE, the Queen's Native Students Association (QNSA), and the Aboriginal-focused programs in the faculties of Education (ATEP and AWIES), Engineering and Applied Science (AAE and SERA), and the School of Policy Studies (PMPA).
- Council discussed undergraduate enrolment trends. Between 2011-12, when targeted recruitment activities began, and 2014-15, applications from self-identified Aboriginal students to undergraduate direct-entry programs have increased by 30%; offers have increased by 61% and acceptances have increased by 93%. The university has recently been able to start tracking the year 1-2 retention rate among Aboriginal students. In 2014-15, 93% of first-year self-identified Aboriginal students have returned for second year, which is approximately the same as in the total first-year population. Four Directions is working with the School of Graduate Studies and professional faculties to try and gather a more complete picture of Aboriginal students at Queen's.
- Members raised the issue of how best to encourage students to self-identify at any time after they apply (when they have a formal option to do so on the application form). This will be discussed by the Access and Support Working Group. It is estimated that one-third to one-half of Aboriginal students at Queen's choose to self-identify.
- Further to the discussion at the April 2014 meeting, Council was informed of processes have been put into place to ensure timely communication to prospective and current students, as well as Bands and education council members, about the upcoming year's tuition and fees.
- The Indigenous Knowledge, Curriculum and Research Working Group will work to develop a process to ensure that courses that could be added to the Faculty of Arts and Science's Indigenous Minor, are not missed. There are at least 14 students in 2014-15 who have identified Indigenous Studies as their minor. The minor has introduced a "Feasts with Profs" program.
- Council's first meetings for 2015 were scheduled for January 19 and May 11.
- [Full meeting notes](#) are available on the Council's website.

The following stories about Aboriginal students, faculty, staff and initiatives were posted to the university's news website in 2014:

[Queen's hosts national conference on Aboriginal Physical Activity](#), February 14, 2014  
[Queen's experts to explore status and future of Arctic, Northern and Indigenous Women](#),  
February 24, 2014  
[Queen's celebrates Aboriginal culture during week-long event](#), March 14, 2014  
[Students aim to form bond with Aboriginal youth](#), March 25, 2014  
[Student storytellers enjoy success](#), April 1, 2014  
[National Scholars will enrich teaching and research](#), April 14, 2014  
[Deputy Provost dishes feast at Four Directions](#), April 17, 2014  
["Double-double" gift helps students in need](#), April 29, 2014  
[Teepee teachings](#), May 23, 2014  
[Uncovering an oily mystery](#), May 26, 2014  
[Casting Call](#), May 30, 2014  
[The ultimate pay-it-forward movement](#), June 4, 2014  
[Student lends unique perspective to provincial council](#), June 18, 2014  
[Transition program to serve more students](#), June 27, 2014  
[Transforming solo scholarship into dynamic teaching - Armand Garnett Ruffo: Shedding light on contemporary Native issues](#), see p. 8, (e)Affect magazine, Fall 2014  
[Two Queen's alumni and former Principal honoured with naming of new residences](#), December 10, 2014.

[www.queensu.ca/aboriginalcouncil](http://www.queensu.ca/aboriginalcouncil)