Indigenous Student Services Centre Update

Conor Kerr

Hello everyone! We’ve had a few exciting months in the Indigenous Student Services Centre. We have a few new team members. I would like to welcome Elliott Young our Indigenous Community Engagement advisor, Elizabeth Routledge has moved into the full-time position of Program Coordinator, and Thomas McKercher has joined us as the RBC Indigenous Mentorship Liaison.

The month of September was a busy one for our staff. We welcomed our Indigenous students back with our Day of Welcome on September 20th. This was an extra important event as RBC announced the continued funding of our Indigenous Mentorship Program as well as a couple other programs at the college. We’re really looking forward to continuing to run this program and to see all the great events that the mentors put together for themselves this year.

We also had a very successful Orange Shirt Day event, a big thank you to everyone who wore their orange shirts on this day to commemorate those who went to residential schools. The team also worked on putting together a series of facilitated conversations around the APTN program First Contact. These were meaningful discussions and we were glad that Elder Rick Lightning joined us to help lead the discussions and share his experiences.

Land-Based Learning Symposium

On November 5 and 6, NorQuest College will be hosting a Land-Based Learning Symposium. We are looking forward to hearing the important discussions and presentations from our keynote speakers Selwyn Button, Dr. Alex Wilson, and Dr. Leroy Littlebear as well as information from the other presenters. We are expecting 250 people to attend this event, including educators from Indigenous communities, school boards, and post-secondaries across Canada. For more information on the Land-Based Learning Symposium, visit our website landbasedlearningsymposium.com or contact Conor Kerr, Manager of Indigenous Relations & Supports.
The RBC Indigenous Mentorship Program is back in action. Our meetings are held at the beginning of each month. We will also be featuring various speakers throughout the year. The next meeting is November 1 at noon in the Indigenous Student Centre. If you have any questions about being a mentor, the programs and supports that are offered, or want to participate, please feel free to drop by the Indigenous Student Centre at anytime and chat with Thomas McKercher or send him an email at Thomas.McKercher@norquest.ca

Wâsênâkwan Boys Camp

Elliott Young

From August 13 to 16, MacEwan University and NorQuest College partnered with the Edmonton Public School Board to host an Indigenous girl and boys camp, respectively. For the week, NorQuest welcomed students from high schools and junior highs across Edmonton onto campus to have them participate in ceremony, teachings, and to explore Edmonton. The week began with an activity facilitated by Hunter Cardinal, local actor and entrepreneur, to break the ice, then followed by a sweat ceremony hosted on Enoch Cree Nation. Through the week the youth had the opportunity to learn from many individuals and knowledge keepers in Edmonton. Nakehko Lamothe a hockey player on the Grant MacEwan Griffins from Calling Lake shared his experience with balancing culture and athletics. Chris Saddleback a local Indigenous chef that showed them a cost effective way to make pizza and how to pursue a career in the food industry. Vince Steinhauer from Saddle Lake showed the youth how to make drums and how to maintain them. Rocky Morin from Enoch showed the youth the importance of drumming and its connection to culture. Carla Badger, who took the youth (both camps) on a walk through the river valley to show them the significant Indigenous sites in Edmonton history.
Indigenization Strategy—Best Practices

Over the summer, Lorisia MacLeod (Instruction Librarian) worked with the Indigenous Student Centre to developed citation formats for Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers in both APA and MLA. These formats allow learners to cite teachings with the important elements such as the community ties included and without forced traditional oral teaching methods to conform to western styles of knowing. These citation formats are a small addition but are meant to represent a larger promise to respectfully include Indigenous teachings and voices in our institution. These citation styles are meant to support our Indigenization Strategy, in particular, Strategy Two, Three, and Four (Curriculum and Program Development, Effective Student Support, and Effective Policies, Procedures, and Administrative Processes respectively).

Staff Profile: Conor Kerr

Tânisi, my name is Conor Kerr and I am the Manager, Indigenous Relations & Supports. I started at NorQuest College back in April and am very excited to be in this position. I’m from the Metis community of Lac Ste. Anne and I have relations all throughout Edmonton and the neighbouring First Nations. Previously I worked as a Indigenous Education Consultant with the Edmonton Public School Board and as a Community Liaison for Paul/Enoch/Alexander First Nations Children Services.

In my spare time I enjoy spending time training Labrador Retrievers, working on my Master of Fine Arts, canoeing waterways, amateur ornithology, and tying fly fishing hooks.

Community Dialogues Poetry

On Tuesday March 6, 2018, NorQuest College hosted a Community Dialogue for deeper understanding and healing. The conversation circles held space to speak to the impact of the not guilty verdicts of Gerald Stanley and Raymond Cormier in the Colton Boushie and Tina Fontaine cases and how we can come together to understand these results.

The conversations held in the circles were difficult but much needed as everyone left their circles feeling as though they were able to talk about what was in their hearts and minds.

To help us heal and understand with both our hearts and minds, local poet Amber Paquette was invited to join our circle and capture the essence of our sharing in a poem. May her beautiful, heartfelt and inspiring piece serve us all in a good way on our path to reconciliation. Hiy Hiy

Upcoming Events:
October 12 – Thanksgiving Lunch
October 12 & 13 – Dreamcatcher Conference
October 15 – Scholarship Deadline
November 5 & 6 – Land-Based Learning Symposium
November 7 – 9, Indspire National Gathering Edmonton
November 16 – Indigenous Speaker Series – Lewis Cardinal
It is stained many different colors.

We arrived to Amiskwaciy Wâskahikan

The first drop, was hopelessness – it broke the trembling calm.

I wondered, how far had she come? From a red coast rocked by seas across sandy shores?

How her heart must have drummed

beneath her ebony hide, as the light flickered through new windows from a winter sun-tide.

"I have no hope," she said in a whisper a lost newcomer, yet still a soul-sister.

Two lives had been taken, Nehiyaw in spirit—so we sat in circles of seven discussing the empiric.

She took her place within our circle upon the Western corner, where Grandmother paskwâw and Sage resided guarding all those of black colour.

In the second drop, we felt frustration and a man’s unknowing began to pool.

We felt it in our collective waters so dissonant...so cool.

Could we ignite his Sacred Fire and feed the flames to stoke them higher?

We lead him to the Northern Corner guiding him hand and hand - we did not see him as white like the snow upon stolen land.

Grandmother paskwâw mostos taught us kindness with Sweetgrass to heal the past.

The man sat upon the North Corner protecting all those of white colour, at long last.

The third drop was faith she brought a dawn in her heart, a migrant from the east, she wished to learn from the start:

The truth of Colten Boushie, the verity of Tina Fontaine. I ask that you do this with me and say their names.

Colten Boushie
Tina Fontaine

Grandfather Kihew grant us all the gift of honesty and tobacco to bless the Eastern corner, to safeguard all those of yellow colour.

For the fourth drop is belief to see change to ripple far and long - to speak our mother-tongue and freely sing our sacred songs.

Are yet overcome with the readiness to plant our new seeds of hope, when other’s yet can’t?

Are we prepared to pour the rains of trust, over our convictions to make way for justice’s germination?

Grandfather Mahikan will await the full bloom of summer where the Red Nation resides guarded by boughs of Cedar.

Our drops have rippled, across the thresholds of time:

we will continue to weave our vibrant soul lines.

We have spun a tapestry of hope to hoop the Four Colours of man: Red, white, yellow and black - we are the Medicine Wheel which protects this land.

Our tears have rippled as one we have been bound together in solidarity - we are praying for a peace we will one day see.

The pain of one, is the pain of all - it is time to set us free for the joy of one, is the joy of many -

it is time to answer the call.

Poem by Amber Paquette

Contact Information

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