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MEDIA RELEASE

Expanding Indigenous spaces and cultural awareness training among calls to action to advance reconciliation at SFU

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Contact:

Kris Magnusson, Ph.D., Dean, Faculty of Education 778.782.3148, krism@sfu.ca

Justin Wong, University Communications, 778.782.3035/778.782.5151, jrwong@sfu.ca

Final Report: <http://www.sfu.ca/reconciliation.html>

Simon Fraser University's Aboriginal Reconciliation Council (SFU-ARC) has unveiled its final report featuring calls to action to guide the University in assigning one-time, \$9-million funding to support reconciliation projects over the next three years.

Titled *Walk this Path With Us*, the final report represents a major step forward for the University in building a renewed and respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in the SFU community.

SFU-ARC developed 34 calls to action, organized into four clusters. These include: creating safe and welcoming spaces for Aboriginal peoples; curriculum innovation and indigenization; student pathways and support; and administration, hiring and project implementation.

Among the calls to action to address indigenous needs are expanding the Indigenous Student Centre on Burnaby campus, providing cultural awareness preparation for all members of the SFU community and creating more ceremonial spaces at the university. SFU-ARC recognizes that creating real change will involve a coordinated effort to address all four clusters.

In fall 2016, SFU President Andrew Petter established SFU-ARC to facilitate and support broad discussions about how the University could address the [calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) specific to post-secondary education. The ARC was composed of diverse representatives from across the University, including faculty, students, senior administrators and staff.

"Simon Fraser University is committed to being an instrument for reconciliation," says SFU President Andrew Petter. "The work of SFU-ARC and its calls to action will help us advance our efforts to support indigenous students, respect indigenous knowledge and, strengthen ties with indigenous peoples and communities."

"I thank the members of the Council and all those who participated in the work of SFU-ARC for the time and energy they devoted to this important process."

The council, co-chaired by SFU board member Chris Lewis, councilor of the Squamish Nation, and Kris Magnusson, dean of the Faculty of Education, held eight open forums and 11 council meetings over the past 11 months to inform the calls to action for the report. Throughout the dialogue process, the council consulted broadly with indigenous students and the SFU community and examined SFU's current activities, and potential ways to respond to the report. They also met with the Métis Nation of B.C. and three local First Nations: Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh.

Co-chair Lewis says that, while the report is complete, SFU-ARC will continue to encourage Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal

groups at SFU to co-create a preferred future in which SFU is known as a safe, welcoming and supportive environment for Aboriginal students, staff and faculty.

“The open forums represent the start of SFU’s continuous work towards reconciliation and may serve as a model for individual units at the University in their pursuit of indigenization,” says Magnusson.

The final report will be presented at a ceremonial event on Oct. 16 at SFU’s Burnaby campus. The ceremony, rooted in Coast Salish indigenous tradition, will celebrate and witness the work of all those who contributed.

Backgrounder: SFU-ARC Calls to Action

The University is dedicating Aboriginal Strategic Initiative (ASI) funding to programs, policies and activities that facilitate outreach, recruitment, transitions and supports (academic, cultural, physical, emotional, and spiritual) for current and future indigenous students.

Below is a summary of the key ASI priorities. If you’d like to learn more, please see the <http://www.sfu.ca/reconciliation.html> for the SFU-ARC calls to action in full detail.

▪ **Safe and Welcoming Indigenous Spaces**

Recognizing the deep connections that Aboriginal peoples have with the lands on which SFU’s three campuses are located, SFU should continue efforts to create indigenous cultural spaces and dedicated safe student spaces. This includes establishing an Indigenous Cultural Resource Centre at SFU, expanding the Indigenous Student Centre on Burnaby campus, installing Aboriginal language signage, development and implementation of cultural awareness training for all members of the SFU community and removing colonial art offensive to the indigenous population.

▪ **Curriculum Innovation and Indigenization**

Further efforts to indigenize curricula and curricular processes with adequate resources and supports to ensure the success of curricular revision initiatives. Includes creating an Indigenous Curriculum Review Committee, dedicating funds to support faculty who wish to indigenize their courses, and establishing an Indigenous Curriculum Resource Centre.

▪ **Student Pathways and Supports**

Co-create and co-manage pathways to success for indigenous students. Includes initiating a scholarship program, and providing enhanced support to first year students through the hiring of an Aboriginal Student Success Facilitator. As well, creating a role, temporarily called the Community Relations Officer, to maintain dialogue with Aboriginal communities for the purpose of developing new pathways for Aboriginal students into SFU.

▪ **Administration, Hiring, Project Implementation**

Expand the information and education campaign around indigenous protocols and cultural practices so that units have a range of resources to draw upon in planning events and ceremonies. Seek opportunities for greater representation of Aboriginal peoples among the university’s faculty and staff. Create leadership and coordination roles for implementing and reporting on the calls to action over a three-year period. This could entail new hires or secondments, and must begin in year one.

ABOUT SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY:

As Canada’s engaged university, SFU is defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research and far-reaching community engagement. SFU was founded more than 50 years ago with a mission to be a different kind of university—to bring an interdisciplinary approach to learning, embrace bold initiatives, and engage with communities near and far. Today, SFU is Canada’s leading comprehensive research university and is ranked one of the top universities in the world. With campuses in British Columbia’s three largest cities – Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey – SFU has eight faculties, delivers almost 150 programs to over 35,000 students, and boasts more than 145,000 alumni in 130 countries around the world.

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CONTACT US

Simon Fraser University
8888 University Drive
Burnaby, B.C.
Canada V5A 1S6