

CASE FOR SUPPORT

Indigenous Education Centre



September 10, 2024



Indigenous Education Centre. Stantec concept render 2023. Design courtesy of Garry Gottfriedson, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc.

The Indigenous Education Centre (IEC) at TRU will be a dedicated space for culturally-conscious Indigenous scholarly research, education and student support that honours Secwépemc ways of knowing and being. Long-awaited, it will be a centralized hub for Indigenous learning and support services, with construction beginning in 2024. Investment in TRU's Indigenous Education Centre powerfully symbolizes truth and reconciliation in post-secondary education.

"This is a very important moment in Secwépemc and Indigenous history. We're smashing the shackles of colonization. It's a huge step to understanding what Indigenization is, and what decolonization means."

– Secwépemc Cultural Advisor Garry Gottfriedson during the traditional Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc land blessing at the future site of the Indigenous Education Centre.

The university of choice for Indigenous learners

The Indigenous Education Centre marks a new era in TRU's commitment to reconciliation and decolonization as a university that strives to be the first choice for Indigenous learners from near and far. Indigenous students make up approximately 10 per cent of the TRU student population at the Kamloops campus, 37 per cent at the Williams Lake campus, and seven per cent of Open Learning. **A majority of Indigenous students at TRU are female single parents of First Nations and Métis descent enrolled in continuing education and community programs.**

Both TRU campuses are situated on the traditional and unceded territory of the Secwépemc nation in the heart of Secwepemcúl'ecw. The main Kamloops campus, TRU's First House, is located on Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc (TteS) territory. The Williams Lake campus, TRU's Second House, is located on T'exelc (Williams Lake First Nation) territory. The TRU service area also extends into the territories of the St'át'imc, Nlaka'pamux, Nuxalk, Tšilhqot'in, Dakelh and Syilx nations. This includes more than 80 First Nations bands and various Métis organizations.

Constructing a Building that Honours Secwépemc Design

Construction on the Indigenous Education Centre will begin in late 2024 at the centre of TRU's campus as part of a redevelopment vision for the former site of the Cariboo Child Care Society day care. After five years of conceptualizing, the final design was developed in collaboration with Nisga'a architect

Patrick Stewart. With a budget of \$22 million, the sustainable building will span 14,500 square feet and be designed to LEED Gold standards. A Secwépemc blessing ceremony with a Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Elder was held at the IEC building site in August 2022.

"Since 2019 the office of Indigenous education has hosted a series of engagement sessions and surveys with TRU Indigenous students, staff, faculty, Elders, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, T'exelc, and the surrounding communities to provide feedback and input on what the TRU Indigenous Building should include. Garry Gottfriedson from Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc was instrumental in the building design based on the Secwépemc summer Council Houses and was a critical part of the planning and development team. We are happy to work closely with the TRU building advisory team consisting of the architect firm, engineering, TRU facilities and main contractor on this project. We are looking forward to continued planning and discussion on the new IEC."

— Tina Matthew
Executive Director, Office of Indigenous Education





Inspired by traditional Secwépemc structures

The Indigenous Education Centre is inspired by Secwépemc summer gathering houses, informed by Garry Gottfriedson (TteS) and designed by Stantec in partnership with Nisga'a architect Patrick Stewart. Its prominent features will include a Community Gathering Space inspired by the traditional design of the summer lodges of the Secwépemc people. It includes a three-story mass timber building to house various teaching, meeting and administrative spaces for Indigenous Elders, students, faculty, staff and community organizations.

In accordance with Secwépemc tradition, Stantec has positioned the Community Gathering Space on the northern edge of the site with its long axis east west—an example of the detailed efforts to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing in the centre's design. The Community Gathering Space and the main mass timber building will be joined by a two-story entrance lobby that faces the existing traffic circle. The entrance lobby will be accessed from University Drive via a bridge through the existing forest.

Clockwise: TRU President Brett Fairbairn addresses those gathered for the site blessing outside the Cariboo Child Care Society. Secwépemc Cultural Advisor to TRU Garry Gottfriedson acknowledges the importance of the Indigenous Education Centre on future generations during the site blessing. Stantec site plan and site photo for the Indigenous Education Centre (2023).

Secwépemc design elements

The Community Gathering Space is inspired by the Secwépemc council lodge. These lodges were a framework of wood covered with hand-woven tule mats. Traditionally, Secwépemc men created a wooden framework made from various types of trees and Secwépemc women would harvest the long green stems of tule from marshes along the rivers. After the tule were dry, the women wove the tule into rectangular mats and sewed the mats together. The tule mats were used to form the outside of the structure and allowed for air to flow through the space, providing a natural form of air conditioning.

Stantec has taken this concept as inspiration for the Community Gathering Space in the Indigenous Education Centre. The exterior will have a scalloped effect to resemble tule mats. The interior will be clad in wood panels also to resemble the tule mats.



Credit: Ken Favrholt and the Secwépemc Museum



The traditional Secwépemc council lodge constructed with tule mats is Stantec's inspiration for the Community Gathering Space in the Indigenous Education Centre.¹

Why here, why now?

"When I started at TRU, that was one of the key things we wanted — to build a legacy, to have a space that would attract Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and allow them to grow. Our Elders say that we forge the footsteps. The young coming behind us can't wear our shoes, but they can follow our footsteps. Over the years, I've visited over 25 universities and talked about our programs. Everyone was so impressed with TRU, how we were leading in a lot of matters in Indigenization. But there's one thing that wasn't impressive — it was our lack of an Indigenous building, an Indigenous hub. Now, we're finally going to be what we said we were going to be — a place for Indigenous learners. This new centre will solidify and finalize our new future."

— TRU Special Advisor to the President on Indigenous Matters Paul Michel



¹ Highlights from the Schematic Design Report prepared by Stantec Architecture Ltd. and Patrick R Stewart Architect in collaboration

TRU has a 10-year goal to eliminate achievement gaps for Indigenous learners. TRU is mandated to serve the Interior BC region and its rural areas that encompass more than 80 First Nations bands. **More importantly, as a place of knowledge, we have a responsibility to be a leader in Indigenous relations and honouring truth, reconciliation and rights. It is encoded in our core values and set out in our 10-year goals. It is built into our identity.**



A large number of communities within our region have high rates of Indigenous people without a high school diploma. Indigenous students in Canada face many barriers in pursuing post-secondary education — including challenging campus environments, lack of social support and limited financial resources.

These challenges are being addressed at TRU under the leadership of the Office of Indigenous Education, which guides TRU's indigenization and decolonization efforts. **The IEC will be centralized in providing support to faculties and schools to incorporate the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into courses, curriculum and programs at TRU.**

The Indigenous Education Centre will coordinate services in a more effective and efficient way to accelerate the university's response to the TRC Calls to Action and strengthen relationships with Indigenous partners — First Nations, Métis, Inuit and surrounding nations — as well as build bridges with non-Indigenous TRU and surrounding communities.

In addition to the central Community Gathering Space, the Indigenous Education Centre will include several much-needed cultural, support, research, staff and shared spaces for the Office of Indigenous Education including:

- an outdoor classroom
- Elder spaces and ceremonial rooms
- a breakout room
- a boardroom
- a quiet study room
- a computer lab
- a lounge study
- Indigenous research space
- executive and staff offices
- Indigenous faculty offices
- Indigenous community spaces



³ Indigenous Community Profile: TRU Integrated Planning and Effectiveness 2019.



Photo by Simone Paul

Indigenous engagement

Consultations for this project date back to 2018. A review of the original 2018 concept began in 2022 with architect Patrick Stewart in partnership with Stantec. Consultations were held with Indigenous faculty, staff and students with involvement and input from Tkemlúps te Secwépemc.

OPPORTUNITIES TO GIVE

TRU is funding \$18 million toward the Indigenous Education Centre
Your generous contributions will fund the remaining \$4 million

TRU welcomes community support to make the Indigenous Education Centre a collaborative focal point on campus. **The Indigenous Education Centre will centralize decolonization efforts at TRU in a transformative way, creating a powerful education and learning centre for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people that extends beyond TRU's campus and the central interior region of BC.** For partners with Indigenous identity and those who share TRU's commitment to reconciliation, this project represents a significant opportunity to contribute to a path forward, together.

To learn more, please contact:

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