

NATIONAL BUILDING RECONCILIATION FORUM (NBRF)

June 25 to 27, 2024 • Laurentian University

SUMMARY REPORT



B. Waboose 2007

Aki Gaabijidebendaagwak

Ka ke ginwaamdanaa Aki Gaabijidebendaagwak Robinson Huron Naakinegewin ode 1850. Miinwa ginwaamdandaa Laurentian Chi-kinomaagegamik gewii teg maanpii gidaa kiimina Atikameksheng Anishinaabek debendaagwak miinwa Chi-odeno Sudbury miinwa gewii debendaagwak Wahnapiatae Anishinaabe kiing. Gichipiitenmananig Anishinaabek-ga nakiitaanaa weweni maanpii Laurentian Chi-kinomaagegamik Debwewin miinwa Minadaapnagewin Nakii Naadmageh Makwataagziwin. Miigwech.

Land Acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850. We also further recognize that Laurentian University is located on the traditional lands of the Atikameksheng Anishinaabek and that the City of Greater Sudbury, also includes the traditional lands of the Wahnapiatae First Nation. We extend our deepest respect to Indigenous peoples – as a sign of our continued relationship we will support Laurentian University's Truth and Reconciliation Task Force Recommendations. Miigwech.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3** Welcome and Acknowledgements
- 4** Introduction to the Report
- 5** Indigenous Education
- 6** Opening Ceremony
- 8** Vendor Market
- 10** Community Day
- 12** Nibwaachidwin Social
- 14** Theme 1: The Power of Storytelling – Crafting Compelling Narratives
- 16** Theme 2: Language and Culture – Elders and Cultural Practitioners in the Workplace
- 18** The Banquet
- 20** Theme 3: Cultural Diversity – Celebrating Differences and Building Bridges
- 22** Theme 4: Shaping the Future – Trends and Insights in Implementing the TRC
- 24** Panels
- 26** Laurentian University Initiatives
- 28** Key Recommendations
- 29** Feedback Summary
- 30** Closing Remarks / Heartfelt Thanks
- 31** Sponsors

Welcome and Acknowledgements



It was with immense pride and honour that the Office of Academic and Indigenous Programs hosted the 8th Annual National Building Reconciliation Forum: Indigenous Education and Mapping Out Institutional Spaces at Laurentian University.

Advancing Reconciliation with Indigenous communities is a central part of our mission and a responsibility we all share. The Forum provided a significant opportunity to convene people and foster Indigenous-led discussions, learning, and collaboration, all aimed at progressing the work of Truth and Reconciliation.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the local Indigenous communities for their unwavering support and partnership. Your guidance was crucial in shaping this event. We also acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our esteemed presenters, keynote speakers, and Elders, including Grace Fox, Sheila Cote-Meek, Waubgeshig Rice, Tanya Talaga, and Susan Manitowabi. Their insights and experiences enriched our collective journey towards Reconciliation.

Special thanks go to our community sponsors – Science North, Wahnapiatae First Nation, and Atikameksheng Anishinaabek – whose support was essential in making this Forum a reality. Additionally, we express our deepest gratitude to the Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre, the organizing committee, and the numerous volunteers who dedicated their time and energy to planning and executing this successful gathering.

We also thank our amazing Laurentian University faculty and staff who contributed to the presentations and supported the Forum in countless ways. As well, a special Miigwech goes out to the NBRF planning committee. Your hard work and commitment were vital to the event's success.

The Forum facilitated the sharing of knowledge and experience through various formats, including panel discussions, oral histories, lectures, and presentations from the visual and performing arts. A critical element was the direct and collaborative engagement with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, which enriched the diverse program of guest speakers, special sessions, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers.

This report serves as a testament to the collaborative spirit and shared commitment of everyone involved. It is designed to inspire and propel the work of Truth and Reconciliation within our educational institutions in Ontario and across the country.

Miigwech,

Dominic Beaudry B.A., B.Ed., M.A.
Associate Vice-President of Academic and Indigenous Programs
Office of Academic Indigenous Programming

Introduction to the Report

Laurentian University proudly hosted the 2024 National Building Reconciliation Forum from June 25th to 27th on its Sudbury campus. This event brought together close to 300 participants, including Indigenous leaders, community members, and representatives from post-secondary institutions across Canada. The forum served as a vibrant meeting point for individuals and organizations dedicated to advancing reconciliation in education and creating inclusive learning environments.

The forum began with a ceremonial gathering that honored the protocols and teachings of the local Anishinaabe Nations, establishing a reflective atmosphere that encouraged participants to engage deeply with the theme: “Indigenous Education and Mapping Out Institutional Spaces.” This theme emphasizes the importance of incorporating Indigenous perspectives into higher education and creating spaces where Indigenous voices are heard and respected. The ceremony served as a poignant reminder of the need for respect and acknowledgment of Indigenous traditions, laying a strong foundation for the discussions that followed.

A highlight of the event was the symbolic paddle transfer from Western University to Laurentian University. This ceremony, rich in cultural significance, represented the passing of responsibility and ongoing efforts towards reconciliation. The paddle, a traditional symbol of journey and collaboration, reinforced the commitment to advancing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action. This transfer not only symbolized the commitment of both institutions to the principles of reconciliation but also underscored the collaborative nature of this ongoing journey.

Over three days, the forum featured panels, workshops, and discussions exploring strategies and best practices for implementing the TRC’s Calls to Action. Participants examined topics such as cultural diversity, Indigenous verification, and the integration of traditional knowledge within academic settings. These sessions provided valuable opportunities for dialogue and collaboration, promoting a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in advancing reconciliation. The diversity of sessions allowed for a rich exchange of ideas, experiences, and best practices, creating a dynamic and inclusive environment for learning and growth.

In addition to the formal sessions, the forum facilitated numerous informal networking opportunities, enabling participants to build relationships and share insights beyond the structured discussions. These interactions were crucial in fostering a sense of community and shared purpose among attendees, emphasizing the collective effort required to advance reconciliation in education.

This report captures the key themes and insights from the forum, providing a comprehensive overview of the discussions and ideas shared. It highlights ongoing efforts to promote cultural diversity, integrate Indigenous knowledge, and build bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities within the academic landscape. The following sections summarize the critical takeaways from the forum, reflecting the dedication and collaborative spirit of all those involved in the pursuit of truth and reconciliation in education.



Indigenous Education: Introducing the plans for a New Indigenous Interdisciplinary Studies Program

One of the most pivotal moments of the 2024 National Building Reconciliation Forum was the introduction of plans for a new Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Studies by Dr. Jennifer Johnson, the newly appointed Dean of Arts at Laurentian University, and Dr. Janice Liedl, Director of the School of Liberal Arts. Their session, held during lunch on the first day, embodied the forum’s theme of Indigenous Education and Mapping Out Institutional Spaces.

Dr. Johnson and Dr. Liedl enthusiastically presented the faculty’s ambitious project to an audience that far exceeded expectations, drawing around half attendees who were present for day 1. These included practitioners, community members, and students from across the country, all of whom displayed keen interest in plans for the new program. The impressive turnout and high level of engagement underscored the community’s strong support for educational advancements in Indigenous studies and highlighted the significant demand for integrating Indigenous perspectives and knowledge systems within the academic curriculum at Laurentian University.

Consultation and Discussion Highlights

The National Building Reconciliation Forum provided the first major opportunity to consult widely on the new Indigenous Studies program. Dr. Johnson and Dr. Liedl posed critical questions to spark discussion, such as what attendees would want to see in the program, its purpose, and what should be excluded. These questions led to vibrant and productive dialogue, offering valuable insights that might shape the development and delivery of the program. Participants offered a variety of perspectives, and the enthusiasm and active participation throughout the discussion highlighted the collective commitment to this initiative.

Future Steps and Community Engagement

Dr. Johnson’s and Dr. Liedl’s session aligned perfectly with the forum’s main theme of Indigenous Education and Mapping Out Institutional Spaces. It served as an essential initial consultation, bringing together a diverse group of people and organizations that the faculty might not ordinarily have the opportunity to engage with. The faculty is also in the process of hiring a tenure-track professor in Indigenous Studies, further demonstrating their commitment to this initiative.

The forum provided a valuable platform for gathering insights and fostering dialogue on the new Indigenous Studies program. Dr. Johnson’s and Dr. Liedl’s discussion highlighted the collective commitment to rebuilding stronger and more inclusive educational frameworks that honor and respect Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The high level of engagement and positive response to their session underscores the importance of continued consultation and collaboration as Laurentian University moves forward with this significant educational endeavor.

OPENING CEREMONY

The forum commenced with the lighting of the sacred fire at 6:30 a.m., a ceremony that saw a remarkable turnout, highlighting the community's deep commitment to reconciliation. As dawn broke, participants gathered for the sunrise gathering, a profound moment of unity and renewal. The event's significance was further marked by the symbolic transfer of the National Building Reconciliation Forum paddle and the moccasins.

This ceremonial handover saw Paula Cornelius Hedgepeth and Elder Bruce Elijah from Western University entrusting the paddle and moccasins to Dominic Beaudry, Associate Vice President of Academic Indigenous Programs, and Dr. Lynn Wells, President of Laurentian University, in a gesture that bridged institutions and honored shared goals. Following this powerful start, Elder Lorney Bob led a prayer to bless the forum and ensure its success, setting a spiritual and hopeful tone for the days ahead.

The number of participants who gathered for the breakfast feast surpassed all expectations. The round room was brimming with participants, reflecting a collective eagerness to engage in reconciliation efforts. Elder Grace Fox then led an inspiring opening prayer, reinforcing the respectful and hopeful atmosphere. This was followed by welcoming remarks from prominent figures including Chief Larry Roque, Dr. Lynn Wells, Universities Canada President Gabriel Miller, Laurentian University Native Education Council Chair Martin Bayer, and Angela Recollet, who also sits on the Board of Governors at Laurentian University, each highlighting the importance of the gathering. Dominic Beaudry, serving as the Master of Ceremonies for the opening, seamlessly guided the proceedings, ensuring the morning flowed smoothly and maintaining the energy and focus of the participants. His presence and leadership were instrumental in keeping the audience engaged and connected to the event's purpose. The morning then progressed into a vibrant networking session, providing attendees with their first opportunity to explore the bustling vendors market.

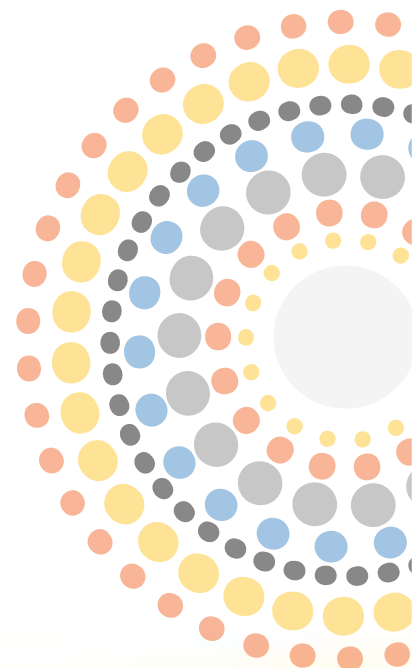


VENDOR MARKET

A Celebration of Indigenous Art and Craftsmanship

Our Vendor Market showcased a diverse array of talented artists and artisans from across the North Shore and Manitoulin Island. Their exceptional products were available for display and purchase throughout the three days of the forum. Attendees had the unique opportunity to explore and appreciate a variety of handcrafted items, including traditional arts, contemporary crafts, and cultural artifacts.

The Vendor Market was a lively and integral part of the forum, highlighting the rich artistic heritage of the region and providing a tangible link to Indigenous traditions and contemporary expressions. By supporting local Indigenous artisans, the market cultivated a deeper connection to the community's cultural and artistic expressions, offering a platform for local businesses and showcasing the vibrant heritage of the area.



COMMUNITY DAY

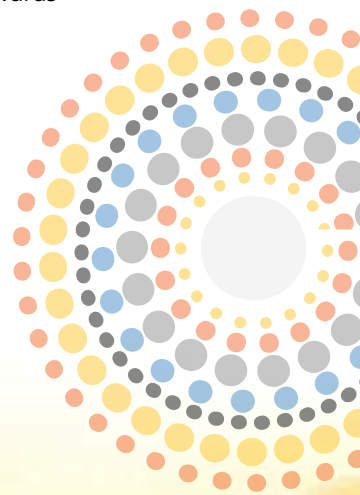
The afternoon of June 25th emerged as an unforgettable experience for many participants of the National Building Reconciliation Forum, offering enriching cultural and educational experiences in the communities of Atikameksheng Anishinaabek, Wahnapiatae First Nation, and at Science North.

Participants visiting **Atikameksheng Anishinaabek** were guided by Majijiwan, an esteemed storyteller, traditional teacher, and Laurentian University faculty member. His teachings centered around the Healing Lodge. Majijiwan also shared insights about bears frequently visiting the lodges as protectors and provided participants with a profound understanding of the lodge's integral role in the community's spiritual practices.

At **Wahnapiatae First Nation**, participants were warmly welcomed by Chief Larry Roque, who shared insights about his community. The visit began with a water ceremony led by Caroline Recollet at the Powwow grounds, followed by teachings around a sacred fire maintained by Shining Turtle, the firekeeper. These ceremonies emphasized the community's deep spiritual connection to water and fire. Later, Tammy Chevrette led a craft session at the band office, where participants created copper pail lanyards, blending hands-on creativity with cultural education.

Science North offered another enriching experience, coordinated and led by Emily Kerton, a senior scientist and the lead of Indigenous Initiatives. Participants were greeted by Sequoia Wemigwans and Kirtsen St. Louis, who introduced the center's Indigenous programming and community connections. The highlight was the "Under the Same Stars – Minwaadiziwin" presentation, an immersive program exploring Indigenous worldviews and their relationship with the natural world. Participants learned about traditional methods of tracking seasons and essential inventions for survival in northern forests, emphasizing respect for the environment. The visit continued with a tour of Science North, covering the building's history, the meteor impact in the Sudbury area, and engaging workshops, including safe animal handling techniques.

For many of the 80 participants, these community visits were the pinnacle of the conference, providing an invaluable opportunity to connect with Indigenous cultures on a profound level. The experiences at Atikameksheng Anishinaabek, Wahnapiatae First Nation, and Science North enriched the participants' understanding and underscored the importance of community engagement in the journey towards reconciliation.



NIBWAACHIDWIN SOCIAL

A Night of Tribute, Tradition, and Togetherness

The Nibwaachidwin Social began with a solemn tribute to the late Dwayne Trudeau, a cherished rock and roll and blues artist who was a fixture in the Sudbury music industry. When the organizing committee asked Dwayne to be a part of this event, he agreed without hesitation. His family attended the memorial, where a short video of Dwayne performing was played, capturing his vibrant spirit. To honor his commitment to our forum, his picture now hangs in the Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre's seminar room, ensuring his legacy lives on.

The evening's atmosphere quickly shifted as Darren (D.J.) McGregor, the Master of Ceremonies, took the stage with humor and warmth. Engaging the crowd, he had everyone laughing and captivated with his amazing stories and wealth of traditional knowledge. Two drum groups, featuring members from the North Shore and Manitoulin Island, added to the event's richness, their rhythms creating a powerful connection to the cultural roots being celebrated.

This social was centered around the dancers, not just the drummers or D.J. In the first song, dancers emerged, each showcasing their unique style. Held in the Parker Atrium, the powerful sounds of the drum resonated throughout Laurentian University's halls. The drums' reverberation and the dancers' skill made this intimate social feel as grand as the largest powwows, with every beat echoing a sense of unity and celebration.

D.J. seamlessly transitioned between roles – MC, drummer, storyteller and often providing comedic relief which kept the energy level high. The night was filled with individual dance showcases, representing all age groups from young children to seasoned dancers. D.J. provided the history of the origin of the dances being showcased, as well as detailed descriptions on their regalia and what each piece meant. The event concluded with an intertribal dance, allowing everyone in attendance to join together in celebration, marking the end of a wonderful day and event. This final dance brought a palpable sense of community and joy, with participants moving together in harmony, embodying the spirit of the forum and the collective journey toward reconciliation and cultural appreciation.



THEME 1

The Power of Storytelling: Crafting Compelling Narratives

Crafting compelling narratives is an art form that holds immense power. Through storytelling, we connect, inspire, and convey complex ideas and emotions in ways that resonate deeply with others. In the context of reconciliation, education, and community-building, the power of storytelling can be transformative, bridging gaps between diverse perspectives and building understanding and empathy.

Relatable and Engaging Narratives

At the heart of effective storytelling is the ability to create relatable and engaging narratives that draw from personal experiences, cultural heritage, and shared histories. These narratives should reflect the voices and lived experiences of those involved, particularly Indigenous communities, whose stories have often been marginalized or misrepresented. Highlighting Indigenous perspectives not only promotes inclusivity but also enriches the broader narrative with diverse insights and wisdom.

Personal Experiences and Cultural Heritage

Narratives rooted in personal experiences and cultural heritage can resonate deeply with audiences, creating connections that transcend cultural and geographical boundaries. For instance, sharing stories about traditional practices, family histories, or significant community events can help illustrate broader themes of resilience, identity, and continuity. By focusing on the authenticity and specificity of these experiences, storytellers can create powerful narratives that engage and educate.

Shared Histories and Community Connections

Engaging with shared histories and community connections is another crucial aspect of storytelling. This approach involves acknowledging and incorporating the collective experiences and histories of communities, especially those that have been overlooked or misrepresented.

By doing so, storytellers can help to repair and strengthen the bonds within and between communities. This is particularly important in the context of reconciliation, where understanding and addressing historical injustices is essential for building a more equitable future.

Voices and Lived Experiences

Incorporating the voices and lived experiences of Indigenous communities is vital for creating authentic and impactful narratives. These stories provide unique perspectives and insights that can challenge dominant narratives and offer new ways of understanding and engaging with the world. By centering Indigenous voices, storytellers can help to amplify these perspectives and contribute to a more inclusive and accurate representation of history and culture.

Transformative Potential of Storytelling

The transformative potential of storytelling lies in its ability to connect people, bridge differences, and inspire change. Whether through personal anecdotes, cultural narratives, or historical accounts, storytelling can illuminate the experiences and perspectives of others, fostering empathy and understanding. In the context of reconciliation, storytelling can be a powerful tool for healing, education, and community-building, helping to create a more inclusive and just society.



Keynote Speaker:
WAUBGESHIG RICE
Author and Journalist,
Wasauksing First Nation

Key Takeaways from Presentations

The discussions highlighted the critical role of storytelling in Indigenous cultures for education, community building, and cultural preservation. Storytelling serves as a therapeutic tool, helping communities process historical traumas and contemporary challenges. Narratives connect the past, present, and future, ensuring the transmission of cultural values and knowledge across generations.

Practices in Storytelling for Reconciliation:

- Sharing personal journeys to highlight the impact of acknowledgment and reconciliation, as seen through experiences with historical contexts.
- Drawing inspiration from personal experiences to create narratives that reflect resilience and preparedness in the face of challenges.
- Using elders’ perspectives to illustrate resilience and survival through historical adversities, emphasizing the enduring spirit of communities.

- Integrating oral traditions that encompass sacred, moral, historical, and personal narratives, demonstrating their adaptability and relevance.
- Maintaining cultural continuity and resilience through storytelling that supports cultural heritage and strengthens community bonds.

Benefits of Storytelling

Storytelling empowers individuals and communities by providing a platform to share their experiences and perspectives. It connects the past, present, and future, ensuring the transmission of cultural values and knowledge across generations. Shared stories support a sense of belonging and strengthen community ties. Valuing diverse narratives cultivates empathy and mutual respect. Additionally, storytelling inspires resilience and encourages communities to persevere through adversities by sharing tales of survival and resistance.



THEME 2

Language and Culture: Elders and Cultural Practitioners in the Workplace

Revitalizing Indigenous Languages

Revitalizing Indigenous languages is essential for preserving cultural heritage and promoting holistic health. Indigenous languages carry the wisdom, traditions, and worldviews of their communities, making their preservation crucial for cultural continuity and identity.

Role of Elders and Cultural Practitioners

Elders serve as cultural anchors, sharing wisdom and experiences to maintain and respect Indigenous languages and practices. Their presence enriches workplaces and educational environments, promoting cultural continuity and a deeper connection to traditional roots. Cultural practitioners also play a critical role by connecting traditional knowledge to contemporary settings ensuring that knowledge remains respected, honoured and practiced.

Creating Inclusive Spaces

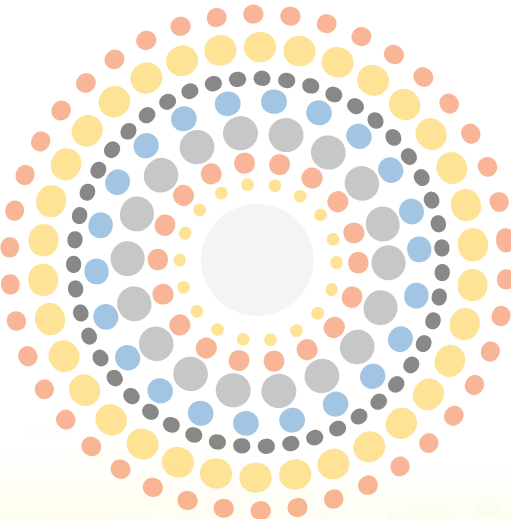
This theme highlights the need to create spaces where Indigenous knowledge is valued and recognized. Supporting reconciliation and fostering a more inclusive approach to education and professional development involves acknowledging and incorporating Indigenous perspectives. This can be achieved by involving Elders and cultural practitioners in daily operations and decision-making processes.

Building a Sense of Community

Involving Elders and cultural practitioners builds a sense of community, bridges generational gaps, and ensures that Indigenous culture is preserved and passed down. Their involvement promotes cultural awareness, mutual respect, and understanding, contributing to a more diverse and harmonious society.

Enhancing Cultural Awareness and Respect

By embedding these practices into daily operations, institutions enhance cultural awareness and respect. Inclusion of traditional knowledge into educational and professional settings supports a comprehensive understanding of Indigenous perspectives, fostering an environment where all voices are heard and valued.



RENÉE LEMOYNE, ELDER LORNEY BOB, AND MAJIJIWAN

Anishinaabemowin Land-based Language Immersion Learning Implications on Wholistic Health

Key Takeaways from Presentation

The presentation highlighted the critical role of language and culture in Indigenous communities for education, community building, and cultural preservation. Revitalizing Indigenous languages and integrating traditional knowledge into modern settings serve as therapeutic tools, helping communities process historical traumas and contemporary challenges. These practices connect the past, present, and future, ensuring the transmission of cultural values and knowledge across generations.

Key Practices in Incorporating Traditional Knowledge:

- **Holistic Health Benefits:** Learning Indigenous languages, such as Anishinaabemowin, through land-based courses supports physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.
- **Collaboration with Elders:** Involving Elders and language teachers in educational programs enhances the learning experience and ensures the transmission of traditional knowledge.

- **Cultural Immersion:** Immersion courses that integrate language and cultural practices demonstrate significant health and well-being improvements among participants.
- **Reconciliation and Cultural Sustainability:** Efforts to revitalize languages and integrate traditional knowledge align with the goals of reconciliation and promote cultural sustainability.
- **Inclusive Environments:** Creating spaces that value and integrate Indigenous knowledge supports inclusive and culturally rich environments.

Benefits of Language Revitalization

Revitalizing Indigenous languages empowers individuals and communities by providing a platform to share their experiences and perspectives. It connects the past, present, and future, ensuring the transmission of cultural values and knowledge across generations. Shared cultural practices support a sense of belonging and strengthen community ties. Valuing diverse narratives cultivates empathy and mutual respect. Additionally, language revitalization inspires resilience and encourages communities to persevere through adversities by maintaining their cultural identity and heritage.

THE BANQUET

A Celebration of Culture, Community and Collaboration

The Banquet, held at the conclusion of Day 2 brought together a capacity crowd of 100 forum participants, community members, and distinguished guests for a memorable night of entertainment and knowledge sharing, reinforcing the forum's commitment to mutual respect and understanding.

The banquet featured outstanding performances by two Indigenous rock artists, Jordan Mowat and Elijah Manitowabi. Their electrifying performances energized the audience and celebrated the rich musical heritage of Indigenous talent. The music served as a powerful reminder of the evolving nature of Indigenous musicians and expression.

The evening was further enriched by an excellent keynote address from Duke Peltier, a member of the 1850 Robinson Huron Treaty Litigation Team who negotiated the historic \$10 billion treaty settlement. He spoke passionately about treaties and legislation, providing a deep understanding of the historical and contemporary significance of treaties and their impact on Indigenous communities. Peltier's address was both enlightening and thought-provoking, offering valuable perspectives on the ongoing journey towards reconciliation.

The Banquet was a celebration of culture, community, and collaboration. It exemplified the spirit of the forum – bringing people together to share knowledge, build mutual respect, and create lasting connections. The combination of music and insightful dialogue created an atmosphere of unity and reflection, leaving a lasting impression on all who attended.

We are grateful to Jordan Mowat, Elijah Manitowabi, and Duke Peltier for their contributions to a meaningful evening. Their performances and words enriched our understanding and appreciation of Indigenous culture and history, making The Banquet a truly unforgettable experience. The event celebrated the artistic and intellectual achievements of Indigenous individuals and reinforced the forum's goal of creating inclusive and respectful educational spaces that honor Indigenous ways of knowing and being.



THEME 3

Cultural Diversity: Celebrating Differences and Building Bridges

Celebrating Cultural Diversity

Recognizing and valuing cultural diversity is essential in creating inclusive and supportive educational environments. Celebrating differences involves acknowledging the rich variety of backgrounds, traditions, and perspectives that individuals bring. This appreciation not only enriches the educational experience but also promotes mutual respect and understanding among students, faculty, and staff.

Building Bridges Between Communities

Building bridges between diverse communities enhances social cohesion and drives innovation and creativity. By encouraging dialogue and collaboration among individuals from different cultural backgrounds, educational institutions can address challenges more effectively and develop comprehensive solutions. This bridge-building process is crucial for creating a sense of belonging and ensuring that all community members feel valued and heard.

Role of Education in Promoting Diversity

Education plays a pivotal role in promoting diversity and inclusion. By integrating perspectives into the curriculum and creating opportunities for intercultural exchange, educational institutions can help students develop a broader understanding of the world and their place in it. This inclusive approach not only benefits students but also enriches the academic community as a whole.

Challenges and Opportunities

While promoting cultural diversity in education is essential, it also presents certain challenges. These include addressing systemic biases, ensuring representation of diverse voices, and overcoming stereotypes and misconceptions. However, these challenges also present opportunities for growth and transformation. By actively working to address these issues, educational institutions can create more equitable and inclusive environments.

The Impact on Student Development

Embracing cultural diversity within educational settings significantly impacts student development. Exposure to a variety of cultural perspectives helps students cultivate critical thinking skills, empathy, and global awareness. It prepares them to navigate and contribute to an increasingly interconnected world with greater sensitivity and insight. Additionally, students who learn in diverse environments are better equipped to challenge their own biases and assumptions, leading to personal growth and a more profound appreciation for the richness of human experience. This holistic development supports not only academic success but also the creation of compassionate, informed citizens who are capable of driving positive change in society.



Keynote Speaker:

DR. SHEILA COTE-MEEK

(Anishinaabe, Teme-Augama Anishnabai),
Vice-President of Equity, People, and
Culture, York University

Key Takeaways from Presentations

The keynote address highlighted the critical importance of cultural diversity in education for building inclusive and equitable learning environments. Celebrating differences and building bridges between communities can enhance mutual understanding and respect. Participants reflected on several key practices and benefits of embracing cultural diversity:

- **Colonial Impact on Education:** Education has historically been a tool of colonization, but it also holds the potential to transform colonized classrooms into spaces of inclusion and respect.
- **Representation Challenges:** Indigenous professors and students are often burdened with the expectation to represent all Indigenous people, which can be an unfair and limiting expectation.
- **Legitimacy and Holistic Approaches:** Indigenous programs and courses are sometimes viewed as not legitimate and lacking as there is a tendency to exclude emotions from academic and professional settings.
- **Transformative Change:** Effective transformation requires collaboration with senior leadership and administration to increase Indigenous representation in the classroom. This should not be a token gesture but a meaningful inclusion of their perspectives and stories.

- **Inclusive Campus Planning:** Ensuring that campus plans and initiatives are created with Indigenous perspectives in mind, making and holding space for these voices, and building relationships based on mutual respect.
- **Community-Driven Research:** Focusing on research that is driven by community needs and perspectives, and avoiding the re-victimization of Indigenous people in educational settings.

Benefits of Cultural Diversity in Education

Embracing cultural diversity in education has numerous benefits. Exposure to diverse perspectives enhances critical thinking and broadens students' understanding of complex issues. Diverse teams bring different viewpoints and approaches, leading to more innovative and creative solutions.

Promoting cultural diversity strengthens social bonds and fosters a sense of community. Valuing diverse narratives cultivates empathy and mutual respect, which are essential for harmonious coexistence. Overall, including cultural diversity into educational settings enriches the learning experience and prepares students to thrive in a global society.



THEME 4

Shaping the Future – Trends and Insights in Implementing the TRC

Implementing Truth and Reconciliation in Education

The implementation of Truth and Reconciliation in education involves the inclusion Indigenous perspectives, histories, and cultures into curricula and institutional practices. This approach is essential for addressing historical injustices and creating more inclusive and equitable educational environments.

Role of Narrative Sovereignty

Narrative sovereignty is crucial in ensuring that Indigenous stories are told by Indigenous people. This practice not only preserves the authenticity of these narratives but also empowers Indigenous communities by giving them control over their own stories. It highlights the importance of accessing and utilizing records, such as those from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), to uncover and share Indigenous histories.

Building Inclusive Educational Systems

Creating inclusive educational systems requires a commitment to making Indigenous education a priority. This includes recognizing and respecting Indigenous governance structures, increasing the number of Indigenous employees and administrators, and establishing Indigenous-centered services and learning environments. It also involves building relationships and being accountable to Indigenous communities in support of their self-determination through education.

Advancing Indigenous Education

Advancing Indigenous education involves developing Indigenous-specific programs and indigenizing existing educational structures. This includes creating programs that address the unique social, cultural, and educational needs of Indigenous peoples. It also involves implementing the TRC's Calls to Action related to education, ensuring that these recommendations are met with concrete actions and measurable outcomes.

Benefits of Weaving Indigenous Knowledge into Academic Settings

Weaving Indigenous knowledge into education empowers individuals and communities by providing a platform to share their experiences and perspectives. It ensures the transmission of cultural values and knowledge across generations, supporting a sense of belonging and strengthening community ties. Valuing diverse narratives cultivates empathy and mutual respect.

Additionally, these practices inspire resilience and encourage communities to persevere through adversities by maintaining their cultural identity and heritage.



Keynote Speakers:

TANYA TALAGA

Award Winning Anishinaabe Journalist and Author



DR. SUSAN MANITOWABI

Academic and Co-Founder of the Maamwizing Indigenous Research Institute

Key Takeaways from Presentations

The presenters highlighted the critical role of incorporating Indigenous knowledge in education for promoting cultural preservation, community building, and addressing historical injustices.

Incorporating traditional knowledge and perspectives into modern educational settings serves as a therapeutic tool, helping communities process historical traumas and contemporary challenges. These practices connect the past, present, and future, ensuring the transmission of cultural values and knowledge across generations.

Key Practices in Implementing Truth and Reconciliation:

- **Narrative Sovereignty:** Ensuring Indigenous stories are told by Indigenous people to preserve authenticity and empower communities.
- **Access to Records:** Utilizing records from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and other sources to uncover and share Indigenous histories.
- **Indigenous-led Education:** Developing educational systems led by Indigenous peoples, based on their own ways of knowing, being, and doing.
- **Land-Based Learning:** Incorporating land-based education to connect students with traditional practices and knowledge.
- **Community Involvement:** Engaging Elders, knowledge holders, and communities in the educational process to ensure the relevance and respect of Indigenous knowledge.
- **Protection of Intellectual Property:** Recognizing and respecting Indigenous intellectual property and research ethics.



PANELS

On days two and three of the forum we were privileged to host three diverse panels, each offering unique insights and perspectives are necessary for advancing Indigenous education and reconciliation. These discussions, enriched by the varied experiences and expertise of the panelists, are essential for creating a collaborative environment where Indigenous voices and issues are given the platform they deserve. The presence of representatives from various institutions and communities highlights the importance of inclusive dialogue in creating pathways toward truth and reconciliation in education.

LUNEC

The Laurentian University Native Education Council (LUNEC) panel provided valuable insights into their current roles and how their skills and experiences support the LUNEC. The panelists discussed the importance of the Tricultural Mandate, emphasizing the necessity of including Indigenous perspectives into programs, staffing, research, and creating safe spaces for all learners. They highlighted the crucial need for strong Indigenous representation on Senate and on the Board of Governors, reinforcing that Indigenous voices must be heard and considered in all institutional decisions. Additionally, they stressed the significance of advancing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recommendations and embedding the calls to action in all work at Laurentian University.

- **Tricultural Mandate:** Emphasizing the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in all areas.
- **Safe Spaces:** Creating inclusive environments for all learners.
- **Indigenous Representation:** Ensuring Indigenous voices are present in decision-making bodies.
- **Advancing TRC Recommendations:** Embedding the Calls to Action in all work at Laurentian University.

PANELISTS

- Martin Bayer, Partner and Head of the Aboriginal Law Group, Weaver, Simmons.
- Beverly Price, Apatisiwin Employment and Training Coordinator, N'Swakamok Native Friendship Centre
- Debbie Debassige, Dean of Post Secondary Education and Training, Kenjegin Teg
- Roxane Manitowabi, Executive Director, Ontario Native Education Counselling Association
- Marnie Yourchuk, Education Program Manager Mamaweswen, The North Shore Tribal Council

RGAE Panel

The Reference Group on Aboriginal Education (RGAE) panelists, representing their respective universities, shared how their roles are supported by the RGAE. They discussed the critical topic of Indigenous verification, emphasizing the importance of creating robust policies to ensure authenticity and respect for Indigenous identities. Each panelist provided updates on their university's progress in addressing Indigenous verification for staff and students, highlighting varying stages of implementation and policy development.

- **Indigenous Verification:** Ensuring authenticity and respect for Indigenous identities.
- **Policy Development:** Updates on progress and implementation stages.
- **Respectful Processes:** Creating environments where Indigenous identities are recognized.
- **Inclusive Educational Landscape:** Building trust and understanding through verification policies.

PANELISTS

- David Newhouse, Professor of Indigenous Studies, Trent University
- Darren Thomas, Associate Vice-President of Indigenous Initiatives, Wilfrid Laurier University
- Kat Pasquach, Aboriginal Outreach and Retention Coordinator, University of Windsor
- Michael White, Special Projects Officer for Indigenous Initiatives, University of Toronto

Presidents' Panel

The Presidents' Panel focused on their roles in advancing the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Calls to Action. Each president shared significant initiatives their universities are undertaking to support these calls to action. Strategies varied, with some presidents detailing completed items and ongoing efforts at their institutions. Laurentian University, in particular, shared updates on the Truth and Reconciliation Task Force Recommendations, outlining both completed actions and future plans for implementation.

- **Leadership Commitment:** Showcasing dedication to reconciliation through TRC Calls to Action.
- **Institutional Initiatives:** Details of completed and ongoing efforts.
- **TRC Task Force Recommendations:** Updates on Laurentian University's progress.
- **Equitable Academic Environment:** Working towards a more inclusive university system.

PANELISTS

- Gabriel Miller, President and CEO, Universities Canada
- Jacqueline Ottmann, President, First Nations University of Canada
- Digvir Jayas, President, University of Lethbridge
- Lynn Wells, President, Laurentian University



Laurentian University's INITIATIVES

The Office of Academic and Indigenous Programs is committed to advancing Truth and Reconciliation through a variety of innovative programs and initiatives that support Indigenous education, research, and community engagement. These initiatives aim to weave Indigenous perspectives and knowledge into the fabric of the university, creating an inclusive and respectful environment.

The School of Indigenous Relations

The School of Indigenous Relations offers two programs for students: the Honours Bachelors Indigenous Social Work (HBISW) program and the Master of Indigenous Relations (MIR) program.

The HBISW program is a four-year degree accredited by the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE-ACFTS). It prepares students for provincial social work registration and licensing. Combining Indigenous and mainstream perspectives, the program emphasizes holism, relationship-building, and cultural competence. With mandatory field practicums, it equips students to work effectively in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, playing a vital role in developing culturally competent social workers.

The Master of Indigenous Relations (MIR) program offers a comprehensive understanding of the issues facing Canada's First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations today. Through a combination of coursework and thesis research, students explore historical and current relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous societies, as well as Indigenous culture, human rights, and governance. This interdisciplinary program is designed to prepare graduates to drive impactful change in various fields, promoting reconciliation and understanding across disciplines.



Maamwizing Indigenous Research Institute

The Maamwizing Indigenous Research Institute promotes collaboration among researchers and community partners, aligning research initiatives with the needs of Indigenous communities. The Institute's key objectives include:

- creating an academic environment that supports research excellence;
- contributing to the advanced training of graduate students;
- developing new research expertise and increasing productivity;
- establishing collaborations with researchers both within and outside Laurentian University and with community partners;
- supporting researchers in aligning their initiatives with community-identified needs.



Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre (ISLC) and Indigenous Student Affairs (ISA)

The Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre ISLC, which opened on June 21, 2017, serves as a hub for cultural, social, and academic support for Indigenous students. It houses the Indigenous Student Affairs office and provides informal study spaces, work and knowledge sharing areas for program staff and Elders, and a central gathering space for learning, meetings, lectures, and cultural events. The ISLC's architecture offers a visible presence for the Indigenous community within the university, symbolizing Laurentian's commitment to supporting Indigenous students and integrating their culture into campus life.

Inclusive Signage

Laurentian University has taken significant steps to create a safe and welcoming environment for Indigenous students by incorporating trilingual signage across the campus. By including Anishinaabemowin, English, and French in its signage, the university not only acknowledges the linguistic heritage of the Indigenous community but also fosters a sense of belonging and respect. This inclusive approach helps Indigenous students feel seen and valued, reinforcing the university's commitment to creating spaces where all students can thrive.

Anishinaabemowin Land-based Language Immersion Program

This program is dedicated to revitalizing the Anishinaabemowin language through immersive, land-based learning experiences. By connecting language instruction with traditional practices and the natural environment, the program enhances appreciation and understanding of Indigenous culture and heritage. This initiative is crucial for preserving and promoting the Anishinaabemowin language and for supporting the cultural identity and resilience of Indigenous communities.



Conclusion

Laurentian University's initiatives in Indigenous education and research are essential in advancing Truth and Reconciliation. By interweaving Indigenous perspectives, supporting community-driven research, and creating an inclusive environment, these programs and centers enhance the understanding and appreciation of Indigenous cultures and histories. Through these efforts, Laurentian University is committed to building a more equitable and respectful academic community.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

for Advancing Reconciliation Efforts

During the Laurentian National Building Reconciliation Forum 2024, three critical areas of action emerged from the collective insights of presentations, interactive discussions, participant feedback.

Strengthen Institutional Commitment

There is a pressing need for university leadership at all levels to actively support and further reconciliation efforts within their strategic frameworks. Key steps include:

- developing comprehensive policies that prioritize decolonization and Indigenization;
- regularly evaluating and updating these policies to reflect ongoing commitments;
- ensuring that reconciliation principles are visible in university governance, curriculum development, and community engagement efforts.

Enhance Accountability and Transparency

To effectively address the TRC's Calls to Action, it is crucial to:

- establish clear, measurable goals for reconciliation initiatives across all departments and units;
- implement a robust system for regular progress reporting, accessible to all stakeholders;
- create a culture of openness where both successes and areas needing improvement are shared transparently, ensuring collective responsibility and continuous learning.

Maintain Continuous Engagement with Indigenous Communities

Sustained, respectful partnerships with Indigenous communities are essential. Key actions include:

- inclusion of Indigenous voices into decision-making processes through Board, Senate, advisory councils and leadership roles;
- ensuring ongoing collaboration with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community leaders in developing and implementing programs, curriculum and initiatives;
- increasing representation of Indigenous peoples in senior leadership positions to influence institutional change from within;
- these recommendations aim to create a solid foundation for genuine and lasting reconciliation, building a more inclusive and equitable environment for Indigenous education and community engagement.

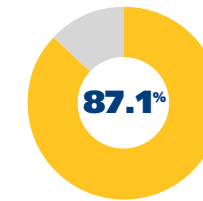


FEEDBACK SUMMARY:

NBRF 2024

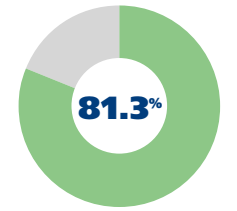
Keynote Speakers

87.1% of respondents rated the keynote speakers positively. This reflects the exceptional quality and profound impact of the presentations. Attendees highlighted the inspiring insights and thought-provoking discussions led by Waubgeshig Rice and Tanya Talaga. They appreciated the engaging and insightful nature of the keynotes, noting the presentations' exceptional quality which deeply resonated with the audience.



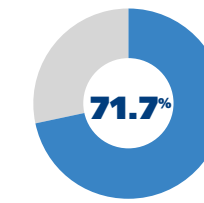
Community Trip

The community trip was a highlight, with **81.3%** of attendees rating it as a positive and enriching experience. The visits to Wahnapiatae First Nation and Atikameksheng Anishinaabek were deeply meaningful and well-organized, providing participants with profoundly enriching insights into Indigenous cultures and traditions.



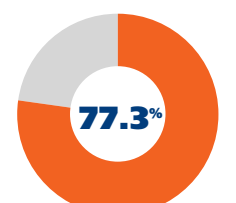
Panelists or Presenters

The panelists and presenters received a favorable rating from **71.7%** of respondents, underscoring their expertise and engaging delivery. Participants appreciated the depth of knowledge and the interactive nature of the sessions. Attendees valued the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions.



Overall NBRF

The overall event received favorable feedback from **77.3%** of participants, reflecting its success in promoting Reconciliation through education and engagement. The well-organized sessions, beautiful campus, and engaging agenda were frequently praised. One participant summed up the sentiment by saying, **"Overall, the NBRF 2024 was an outstanding event that significantly advanced our understanding of Reconciliation in education."**



Areas for Improvement

- Attendees suggested having more panelists/speakers with shorter breaks between sessions.
- Clear communication and sign-ups for community visits would improve the experience, avoiding the "first come, first served" confusion at departure times.
- Attendees recommended increasing accessibility for Elders, such as providing shuttles between buildings, to ensure they can fully participate in the event.
- As always, providing excellent quality of food is an ongoing challenge for any conference.

Closing Remarks

As we conclude this report, we reflect on the significant strides made during the Laurentian University National Building Reconciliation Forum 2024. This forum has been a testament to the collective effort and dedication of all participants, speakers, and community members who have come together with a shared vision of reconciliation and understanding.

Laurentian University is proud to have hosted such an impactful event in the vibrant and welcoming city of Greater Sudbury. Our location has provided a unique backdrop for discussions on Indigenous education, research, and community engagement. The rich cultural heritage of the region and the strong presence of First Nations, Metis, Inuit communities have enriched our conversations and deepened our commitment to supporting an inclusive environment.

The initiatives highlighted in this report – the Honours Bachelor of Indigenous Social Work, the Master of Indigenous Relations, the Maamwizing Indigenous Research Institute, the Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre, and the Anishinaabemowin Land-based Language Immersion Program – demonstrate Laurentian University's dedication to supporting Indigenous learners and weaving Indigenous knowledge into our academic framework. These efforts are crucial steps towards building a more equitable and respectful academic community.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Indigenous communities, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, students, faculty, and staff who have contributed to the success of this forum. Your insights, experiences, and wisdom have been invaluable, and we are committed to continuing this journey together.

Finally, we wish to thank our sponsors, donors and community collaborators for their generous support. Their contributions have made this forum possible and have enabled us to create a platform for meaningful dialogue and collaboration. Your commitment to supporting reconciliation and Indigenous education is deeply appreciated.

Thank you to all who participated, supported, and engaged with the Laurentian University National Building Reconciliation Forum 2024. Together, we will continue to advance the work of Truth and Reconciliation, building a future where respect, understanding, and inclusivity are at the forefront of our academic and community endeavors.

Heartfelt Thanks to Our Dedicated Organizing Committee

The success of the 2024 National Building Reconciliation Forum at Laurentian University would not have been possible without the tireless efforts and dedication of our Organizing Committee. This remarkable team met on a weekly basis, diligently planning and coordinating every aspect of the forum. Their commitment ensured that every detail, from sponsorship and registration to marketing and event planning, was successfully accomplished.

The committee's responsibilities were vast and varied. They secured speakers and entertainment, organized accommodations, coordinated catering and decorating, and managed AV needs, among many other tasks. Their hard work and dedication were integral to the success of the forum, creating a memorable and impactful event for all participants.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the following internal members of the Organizing Committee: Dominic Beaudry, Brenda Brouwer, Julie Ceming, Patrick Demers, Adria Kurchina-Tyson, Sue Lekun, Mary Laur, Renée Lemoyne, Tracy MacLeod, Marie-Lynne Michaud, Carole Perreault, Kigen Pelletier, Jean-Paul Rains, Bill Sanders, Mélanie Tilbury, Jody Tverdal, Nicole Wemigwans, Lynn Wells, Nelson Williams. We also express our sincere appreciation to the external members who contributed their invaluable expertise and support: Martin Bayer, Brooklin Kennedy, Craig Tyson.

Each committee member brought their unique skills and perspectives, contributing to a well-rounded and effective planning process. Their dedication to the forum's mission of advancing reconciliation in education and creating inclusive learning environments was evident in every aspect of the event. The countless hours spent in meetings, the attention to detail, and the unwavering commitment to excellence demonstrated by the Organizing Committee ensured the forum's success. Their hard work resulted in a vibrant and impactful gathering that will leave a lasting legacy.

Thank you to each and every member of the Organizing Committee for your exceptional contributions. Your efforts have made a significant impact, and your dedication to the cause of reconciliation is deeply appreciated. This forum would not have been the same without your invaluable input and hard work.



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