THE GIFT

In 2014, OISE received a $5-million gift from an anonymous donor to strengthen Indigenous education research in Canada. The gift, which is the largest donation ever made to a Canadian faculty of education for Indigenous education research, establishes a prestigious fellowship and launched a comprehensive five-year initiative exploring the educational needs and aspirations of Indigenous peoples. The initiative will help forge new partnerships among Indigenous peoples in Canada, government agencies, non-government organizations and the private sector with the aim of pursuing vital avenues of inquiry that will enrich all public education.

“The University of Toronto is already recognized as a world leader in Indigenous education thanks to the dedication of scholars at OISE who have made Indigenous education a priority,” said U of T President Meric Gertler. “This gift affirms that stature and provides the support required to ensure that U of T continues to lead the way. This is a wonderful accomplishment.”

BECOMING THE GLOBAL LEADER IN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION RESEARCH

Literacy as an Indigenous Right: understanding the role of indigenous language, culture and state responsibilities for respect, recognition and support

Objectives
1. Position OISE and the University of Toronto as the global leader in Indigenous education research
2. Establish effective partnerships with Indigenous organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and the private sector
3. Spearhead ground-breaking research
4. Mobilize knowledge for the purpose of uptake in public policy; and
5. Enrich public education.

Focus on Languages and Literacy
In the first year, the initiative will focus on literacy. An initial focus on literacy will serve as an access point for research and knowledge mobilization around interrelated systems and sectors and their interactions. For example, interacting systems (health, social services and child care, justice and education) and sectors (public, for profit, non-for profit).

A focus on literacy is also consistent with the platform proposed for the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals Post-2015. That literacy is essential for sustainable development in rich and poorer countries. Consequently, research from the OISE initiative would have resonance in an international context.

UN Discussion
In anticipation of the United Nations discussion about the post-2015 sustainable development goals – which includes a focus on literacy – and in conjunction with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples world conference, the Initiative will convene a side session to present leading research outcomes and practical experiences by Indigenous educators and policy makers to deepen the understanding of literacy as an Indigenous right from the Indigenous perspective.
DEAN

Dr. Julia O’Sullivan is currently professor and Dean at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and senior fellow at Massey College at the University of Toronto. Her research has attracted close to $8 million in external funding and has led to the publication of more than 100 scholarly and professional papers and presentations. Her work has been published in English, French, Inuktitut and Ojibwa. Dean O’Sullivan has an international reputation for her commitment to and record in Aboriginal education.

Before coming to OISE, Dean O’Sullivan established the first department of Aboriginal education within a Canadian faculty of education at Lakehead University. She is the founding National Director of the Centre for Excellence for Children and Adolescents with Special Needs focused on Northern and Aboriginal children. Currently, she serves as the Chief Advisor to the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative’s Wiiji Kakendaasoo project.

Suzanne Stewart

Suzanne Stewart is a psychologist and associate professor of Indigenous healing in Counselling Psychology at OISE, University of Toronto, where she is also the Special Advisor to the Dean on Aboriginal Education and the Chair of the Indigenous Education Network. Suzanne holds a Canada Research Chair in Aboriginal Homelessness and Life Transitions.

Suzanne’s research and teaching interests include Indigenous mental health and healing in psychology (homelessness, youth mental health, identity, and work-life development), and Indigenous pedagogies in teacher education and higher education and psychotherapy practice/training. She is also Chair of the Aboriginal Section of the Canadian Psychology Association and is committed to advancing Indigenous healing issues through the discipline of psychology. She is a member of the Yellowknife Dene First Nation.

Jean-Paul Restoule

Jean-Paul Restoule is a member of the Doks First Nation. He is an associate professor of Aboriginal Education at OISE, University of Toronto. He has been a member of OISE’s Indigenous Education Network since 1998 and was a co-Chair of the network for 7 years. He co-founded SAGE Ontario, a peer support group for students whose research involves Aboriginal communities, and is an original member of the OISE working group designed to infuse teacher education with Aboriginal perspectives called Deepening Knowledge, Enhancing Instruction.

Jean-Paul contributes to research on urban Aboriginal identity, HIV prevention messaging in Aboriginal communities, access to post-secondary education for Aboriginal people, and curriculum development with Aboriginal perspectives.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLARS AT OISE

Chief Shawn Atleo will play a lead role in forging new partnerships among Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world. Bringing governments, NGOs and the public sector together with Indigenous peoples to enrich public education.

Chief Shawn Atleo is a Hereditary Chief from the Ahousaht First Nation. In July 2009, he was elected National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations and was re-elected in 2012. Previously, he served two terms as Regional Chief of the BC AFN. Chief Atleo graduated in 2003 with a Master’s of Education in Adult Learning and Global Change from the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia. Chief Atleo’s accolades include 12 honorary degrees from universities in Canada and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for his advocacy work on behalf of First Nations. Chief Atleo also serves as the Chancellor of Vancouver Island University.

Martin Cannon

Martin Cannon is a citizen of the Oneida Nation of Six Nations at Grand River Territory. He is Associate Professor of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Social Justice Education at OISE, University of Toronto.

His published work has focused on the complexity of challenges facing educators charged with decolonizing education and bringing Indigenous knowledge into the academy, colonial dominance and racism, including sex discrimination in Canada’s Indian Act.

Martin has been an advocate for legislative changes to colonial policy, and has worked with organizations like the Native Women’s Association of Canada, Union of Ontario Indians, and the National Centre for First Nations Governance. His book Racism, Colonialism, and Indigenousness in Canada, co-edited with Dr. Lina Sunseri and is published by Oxford University Press. His forthcoming book Undoing Citizenship Injustice: Racism, Sexism and Indigenous Status in Canada is currently under revision with the University of Toronto Press.

Sandra Styres

Sandra Styres is of Mohawk, English and French descent, and resides on Six Nations of the Grand River Territory in Ontario. She is actively involved in her community facilitating research and working with language councils and various community and scholarly experts in the fields of language and Aboriginal education. In January 2014, Sandra will teach Language, Literacy and Curriculum in Aboriginal Education in several programs. Her research interests include: teaching and learning in Indigenous contexts; Land-centered approaches to language, literacy, and curriculum; as well as, integration of Indigenous teaching and learning in higher education with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION RESEARCH

Forging new partnerships among Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world. Bringing governments, NGOs and the public sector together with Indigenous peoples to enrich public education.

Chief Shawn “A-in-Chut” Atleo has been appointed the first Distinguished Fellow of the William A. Macdonald, Q.C. Fellowship in Indigenous Education. As a Distinguished Fellow, Chief Atleo will support The Indigenous Education Initiative at OISE, a comprehensive five-year program to explore the educational needs and aspirations of Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world. Chief Atleo will play a lead role in forging new partnerships among Indigenous peoples in Canada, government agencies, non-government organizations and the private sector.

Jean-Paul is a member of the Doks First Nation. He is an associate professor of Aboriginal Education at OISE, University of Toronto. He has been a member of OISE’s Indigenous Education Network since 1998 and was a co-Chair of the network for 7 years. He co-founded SAGE Ontario, a peer support group for graduate students whose research involves Aboriginal communities, and is an original member of the OISE working group designed to infuse teacher education with Aboriginal perspectives called Deepening Knowledge, Enhancing Instruction.

Jean-Paul contributes to research on urban Aboriginal identity, HIV prevention messaging in Aboriginal communities, access to post-secondary education for Aboriginal people, and curriculum development with Aboriginal perspectives.

In 2008, he completed a Ph.D. at the University of Toronto. He was appointed as the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative’s Distinguished Fellow in 2009.

Jean-Paul has carried out research in Canada and Australia, and his current research interests are in teacher education with Aboriginal perspectives. He co-founded SAGE Ontario, a peer support network for graduate students whose research involves Aboriginal communities, and is an original member of the OISE working group designed to infuse teacher education with Aboriginal perspectives called Deepening Knowledge, Enhancing Instruction.

Jean-Paul contributes to research on urban Aboriginal identity, HIV prevention messaging in Aboriginal communities, access to post-secondary education for Aboriginal people, and curriculum development with Aboriginal perspectives.

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