māmowi āsōhtētān
(маах-ма-ви аах-сох-дай-даан)
Let’s Cross This Together
3rd ANNUAL INTERNAL TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION FORUM
February 28, 2020
Indigenous.usask.ca
Land Acknowledgement

“As we gather here today, we acknowledge we are on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.” - University Council

To Read More About Land Acknowledgements:

Indigenous.usask.ca
Exercising Indigenous Practices

Diverse groupings: Ethical spaces to ethical relationality

According to First Nations University of Canada Professor Emeritus Willie Ermine, ethical spaces arise when competing worldviews or ‘disparate systems’ come together for ‘engagement’ purposes. Ermine notes, the convergence of these groups “can become a refuge of possibility in cross-cultural relations and the legal order of society, for the effect of shifting the status quo of an asymmetrical social order to partnership model between world communities”. (2007, p. 203)

Ethical spaces can lead to ethical relationality, which according to Cree Scholar Dwayne Donald, “is an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to more deeply understand how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other. This form of relationality is ethical because it does not overlook or invisibilize the particular historical, cultural, and social contexts from which a particular person understands and experiences living in the world. It puts these considerations at the forefront of engagements across frontiers of difference”. (2009, p. 6)

At this year’s forum, the concepts of ethical space and relationality facilitate opportunities for our diverse university community to actively listen and respectfully converse with each other, to consider the varying convergent and divergent points, orientations, and perspectives; in this way, complexity is experienced and value for potentially dynamic synergies is cultivated. With this in mind, participants have been intentionally divided into diverse representative groups (i.e., students, faculty, staff, leaders, Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers and political representatives) to engage in constructive
dialogue based on questions that have been placed at the table. The overarching theme for this year is **ReconciliACTION**; therefore, we hope that an abundance of ACTION items will emerge from each table by the end of the day recognizing **What has been done?** and **What can still be done?**

Each table will be asked to select a facilitator who will guide the group through the questions and dialogue. The key points of the dialogue will be recorded by the group-selected note takers. The suggested format for sharing at the tables is the **talking circle**.

“**The purpose of the less formal talking circle, used as part of classroom instruction, is to create a safe environment in which students can share their point of view with others. In a Talking Circle, each one is equal and each one belongs. Participants in a Talking Circle learn to listen and respect the views of others. The intention is to open hearts to understand and connect with one another.**”

- Participants sit in a circle. The circle symbolizes completeness.
- Review ground rules with participants. For example:
  - Everyone’s contribution is equally important.
  - State what you feel or believe starting with ‘I-statements,’ e.g., ‘I feel …’
  - All comments are addressed directly to the question or the issue, not to comments another person has made. Both negative and positive comments about what anyone else has to say should be avoided.
- An everyday object such as a rock or pencil is sometimes used as a talking object.
- When the talking object is placed in someone’s hands; it is that person’s turn to share his or her thoughts, without interruption. The object is then passed to the next person in a clockwise direction.
- Whoever is holding the object has the right to speak and others have the responsibility to listen.
- Everyone else is listening in a non-judgemental way to what the speaker is saying.
Silence is an acceptable response. There must be no negative reactions to the phrase, “I pass.” Speakers should feel free to express themselves in any way that is comfortable; by sharing a story, a personal experience, by using examples or metaphors, and so on.”

This excerpt on talking circles ©Alberta Education; Our Words, Our Ways: Teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learners, 2005, p. 163.

Throughout the day, Witnesses and some note takers will be moving in clockwise rotation from table to table listening for themes and provoking ideas. Dr. Jo-ann Archibald shared:

At Stó:lō cultural gatherings, the Spokesman lets the guests know that it is time to pay attention to the activities by saying, “My dear ones, our work is about to begin.” Usually, the cultural work is witnessed by the guests through the oral tradition, which includes speech, story, and song. (2007, pp. 3-4)

The four Witnesses will share their stories, speech and art, at the end of the forum – a retelling and interpretation of what they felt, saw, heard etc. The college Witness stories will be shared in the OVPIE âcimowin newsletter.

Room Formation

The tables in Marquis Hall, from a bird’s-eye-view, have been intentionally shaped into two concentric rings symbolizing tipi rings or, more closely, Métis flowers.
Beading and Gifting

Creating your own truth and reconciliation bracelet/necklace.

Attendees of the forum have the opportunity to make a bracelet/necklace. This unique creation is a symbol of good and right relations, building and creating together, and trusting the process of truth to reconciliation.

Collect your string for your bracelet or necklace from the tables, under the huge forum questions placed on the walls throughout the room. The locally sourced beads at the tables are gifted to you so you can create your bracelet. At the end of the forum, you will be invited to exchange your bracelet with another participant as a gift symbolizing today’s learning journey, or you can gift your necklace/bracelet to someone who was not able to make it to today’s event – please share significant learnings from the internal Truth & Reconciliation event when passing on your creation.

Please note that all the beads, strings, and stones have been smudged.

The day will end with a Celebration Dance, reminiscent of a round dance, where everyone will hold hands and dance to the beat of the drum – symbolic of Mother Earth’s heartbeat – in clockwise direction.
Agenda at a Glance

Special Guests: Honourable Russell Mirasty and Her Honour Donna Merasty
Elders: Louise Halfe and Norman Fleury
Emcees: Andre Bear and Autumn LaRose-Smith

Morning:

8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.
Registration and Light Breakfast, Marquis Hall
9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
Entrance of Vice-Regal Party
Opening Prayer, Ceremonies and Grounding Remarks
Treaty 6 Honour Song and Métis National Anthem
Overview of Indigenous Practices
   - Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement
   Jacqueline Ottmann
Greetings from University of Saskatchewan:
   - President Peter Stoicheff
Greetings from the Crown:
   - His Honour the Honourable Russell Mirasty
10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
Conversational Circles
10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.
Break
10:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.
Keynote Speaker: Phil Fontaine
11:15 a.m. – 11:20 a.m.
Faculty, Lecturer - Indigenous Studies Randy Morin
11:20 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.
Conversational Circles
11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m.
Lunch and Performance Dancers (12:30 – Sheila Pocha)
   Dean Smith Band
   Kurt Natomagan, Kate Boyer, Shayleen Gervais

Afternoon:

12:50 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Welcome
1:00 p.m. – 1:10 p.m.
Afternoon Opening Remarks:
   - Provost Tony Vannelli
1:10 p.m. – 1:40 p.m.
Keynote Speaker: Professor Kathleen Mahoney, Faculty of Law, U of C
1:40 p.m. – 2:10 p.m.
Conversation Circles
2:35 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.
Break
2:25 p.m. – 2:55 p.m.
Keynote Speaker: Willie Ermine
2:57 p.m. – 3:25
Conversation Circles
3:27 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Witnesses: Reflections and Remarks
Eugene Arcand, Regan Ratt-Misponas, Marilyn Poitras, Brian Kachur
4:00 p.m. – 4:10 p.m.
Closing Address Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement
   - Jacqueline Ottmann
Closing Prayer
4:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Closing Ceremony Dance