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OPEN LETTER

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Oki Niisokwa: (Respectful Niitsitapi Greeting)

First and foremost I want to acknowledge the Musqueam as I am a guest here, as well as The University of British Columbia which sits on unceded lands.

That was quite an election, and the year ahead holds a lot of work for many people, working together gets things done. I spoke up for inclusion in so many ways during the election, as this election was for me a way of showcasing how important to address issues that would make positive changes in many peoples lives. It showed how important and urgently indigenous issues need to be addressed at a university student level. In a way this could be the University of British Columbia's own way to address Reconciliation.

I want to share with this quote from David T. Barnard, chair of Universities Canada and president and vice-chancellor of the University of Manitoba...

“Education has the power to transform the futures of individuals, their families and communities. However, the role of post-secondary institutions in advancing reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples extends much further. We need to look internally and make changes within the core of our institutions, engaging all university communities - administration, students, faculty, staff, donors and alumni.

As part of the recommendations it released at its closing ceremonies, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) called upon educational institutions to engage with indigenous communities and be leaders in reconciliation”.

The following issues were presented at an AMS event held on Monday March 5, 2018. Present were Max Holmes, Cristina Ilnitchi, and yourself. Also in attendance were 4 Beautiful Strong Indigenous Students who attended. I have included the Issues that were on the wall, but as I left early I invited the young ladies to share/add what I had missed.

1. VP - Indigenous Affairs
 - To be filled every election.
 - Person elected responsible for the ideas and issues that arise at the Indigenous Committee level.
 - To sit on the committee/board that addresses indigenous admissions, tuition, UBC policies that have direct effect on Indigenous peoples.
 - To respect and work fully with existing executive.
 - Full roles & Responsibility to be discussed on by committee.
2. Indigenous Affairs Committee -
 - To include an Elder to assist and offer advice when needed, and also to respect the Musqueam Nation.

- To sit & work with existing Indigenous entities & departments e.g.: FNLH, Indigenous Legal Clinic etc.
 - To assist in the implementation of Indigenous based strategic plans in place.
 - To liaise with the President's Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Affairs
 - Terms of reference to be worked on by the Committee and presented to the AMS.
 - To develop events that coincide with Imagine week to ensure that self-identified Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and administration, ideas are heard.
 - First and last days of Orientation week dedicated to the Indigenous peoples
 - Coordinate along with an Indigenous representative a 2 day orientation
 - To have a representative from AMS as well.
3. AMS Staff Positions
- Indigenous committee Assistant to work with existing administrative assistant in implementing goals and ideas of the incoming committee members as well as future committee events and programs
 - Indigenous students or members of off campus community be invited to fill positions at the AMS.
4. To declare that 2020 be the year of Indigenous Students
- Programs and events to be worked on by the committee and presented to the AMS.
 - To approach other Universities to declare this as well.
 - The purpose of the year how societies like the AMS support the Inclusion and support the Indigenous communities and in our (UBC's) way to show reconciliation.
 - This year may also show to the youth who live on Reserves the education they would receive so they be able to help their communities.
 - PSA's de developed showcasing other Indigenous students from UBC who went onto to jobs within the Governments, Hospitals, Non-Profits, Health Care Delivery, Justice system
5. AMS Committees
- AMS will Engage Indigenous students to sit on various committees.
 - Committees that deal with the most important issues will require 2 indigenous students' representatives.
6. Senate & Council & Board of Governors
- 3 seats reserved for Male, Female, and 2 Spirit (not my idea) student representatives.
 - To ensure Indigenous issues are brought up and addressed at all levels, of student and Administrative level.
7. The Ubyyssey
- Installation of indigenous issues editor
 - Indigenous section for issues, stories, etc. by Indigenous Students, staff, faculty etc.
 - Stories both on and off campus that showcase policy regarding Indigenous education e.g.: Housing, Funding, and Practicum Placements for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, Non-Profit Profiles and Companies with Indigenous Focus.
 - Work with Indigenous Affairs Committee to ensure that work is done in holistic manner
8. UBC First Week
- To have 2 days dedicated to Indigenous people cultures. Monday/Tuesday depending on when First week is planned. A Musqueam welcome should precede

- the University's welcome as it is on their territory. Where all in Student Government, Board of Governors, Staff, Council and Administration are present. A Musqueam Welcome and performances from the three indigenous groups.
- Friday a closing ceremony that may kick off this year's annual PowWow. It will be interesting to see a culture experiencing another for the first time.
9. Required & Relevant Indigenous Course
 - That courses be developed in each faculty to inform/educate first year students. Like the already course that is taught Indigenous Foundations.
 10. Long House Lunches
 - That AMS sponsor a lunch in first and second term, to share in AMS events and vice-versa. The best way to engage students.
 11. AMS Events - Imagine and Lecture Series
 - To engage Indigenous community and students to have more performer's/acts/ ideas/views to be a part of the event(s).
 12. Housing - DESPERATLY NEEDED
 - To advocate those in charge to supply adequate dorm housing for single family, or low income dorms that have a holistic feeling.
 13. Indigenous Awareness Week
 - To be held before or soon after the first day of classes.
 - The week to include a tradeshow where Indigenous companies and non-profits introduce themselves and engage with UBC students.
 - Also performances from the First Nations, Inuit and Metis communities.
 - Elder's speakers -4 invite elders from across Canada to speak to new students.
 - Plans for this event to be worked on by Indigenous affairs committee and community members.

A long list, but you must admit after 101 years you must have known that there would be a list somewhere growing. Again I have reached out to the young ladies who were also present at the meeting. I strongly feel that when these issues, and any other issues regarding Indigenous students' that there are **2 Indigenous students in the room.**

A few years ago a Mentor, Warrior and friend Trevor Stratton, of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation near Toronto, who is also Coordinator for the International Indigenous Working Group on HIV & AIDS (IIWGHA), spoke these words when discussing the rights of Aboriginals with HIV/AIDS (APHA')... **Nothing for us - Without Us.** He was speaking to people who live with and work in the HIV/AIDS Community APHA's, families, friends, policy makers, politicians, Caregivers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. I have learned so much from working in this community and with Trevor. I found it to be a community full of Acceptance, inclusion, Respect, and Love.

I feel the first step to be worked on in the coming weeks is for a call out for the VP Indigenous Affairs. The Successful candidate should work immediately on seeking students, and an elder to sit on this committee.

Well it is going to be along year for all of us, but the complied list from Indigenous students, will give each one of us a road map to work with. If you require further information please feel free to contact me at the following contact information: rod_lm@mail.ubc.ca or (604) 562.7267 or although I hate it, facebook.

For Present and Future Indigenous Youth
All my Relations,

Rodney Little Mustache

Cc: Indigenous Students Association
First Nations Studies Students Association
First Nations Indigenous Studies
Indigenous Law Students Association
Center for Excellence in Indigenous Health
First Nations Long House