

June 21, 2018

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**A Message from President Lenton on National Indigenous Peoples Day**

Today, York University, along with the rest of Canada, celebrates National Indigenous Peoples Day—an opportunity to recognize the unique heritages, diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

National Indigenous Peoples Day (formerly National Aboriginal Day) was announced in 1996 through a proclamation by then Governor General of Canada, Roméo LeBlanc, as part of the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Recommendation 5.4.7 of the Report states: "Parliament and the national Aboriginal organizations jointly designate a national First Peoples Day to coincide with the issuing of a new Royal Proclamation and to be celebrated annually across Canada." The Government of Canada chose June 21, the summer solstice, because of its cultural significance for many Indigenous peoples and communities.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its "calls to action," and among them was a call for relevant curricula to support Indigenous students. York University, along with other Canadian universities, has started to answer that call by beginning to indigenize content and pedagogy through Teaching and Learning, Research, Art, History, Language and engagement with our Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

In 2017, led by York's Indigenous Council, the University released its [Indigenous Framework: A Guide to Action](#). Building on our distinct values, traditions, history and vision, the Framework is a catalyst for advancing our vision of being a connected University through expanded participation of Indigenous students, faculty and staff, as well as increased engagement with Indigenous knowledge and communities.

In addition to the collegially developed Framework, the University appointed a special advisor to the president on Indigenous initiatives, Professor Ruth Koleszar-Green. These steps demonstrate a shared commitment to reconciliation and to building stronger connections with and support for the Indigenous community at York and beyond.

Through fostering closer connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and by examining and changing our approaches, policies, practices and structures, we are committed to expanding knowledge, nurturing critical thinking and inspiring new ideas, creativity and innovation.

We are greatly enriched by our Indigenous community members, and the gifts they bring and knowledge they share help to make our University a more diverse, inclusive, caring and respectful place in which to work, study and be inspired.



I encourage everyone in our community to join in the celebrations and the conversation on social media by using the hashtag #yusupportingindigeneity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rhonda L. Lenton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "L".

Rhonda L. Lenton  
President & Vice-Chancellor