

Office of the
PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

January 28, 2022

Dear Thompson Rivers University Faculty Association Decolonization and Reconciliation and Indigenizing Committee,

By email: admin@trufa.ca

I want to thank you for sharing your concerns with me. Like you, I am committed to TRU being a place where all people belong and where the actions and behaviours of all members of our community are inspired by respect for all people.

TRU is committed to honouring Truth, Reconciliation, and Rights and giving particular regard to the Secwépemc culture and belief system. These commitments are central to TRU's Vision Statement, and their implementation through our integrated strategic planning process is a top priority in our community this year.

I want you to know that at TRU, our deans, chairs, directors, and Elders are there to support you, with the full backing of the board and the executive. I expect the operational leaders of the university to check in regularly with all employees — Indigenous employees in particular — to see how they are doing and to offer support. Please reach out to our leaders and let them know how you are doing.

You ask in your letter for TRU to uphold the *United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action for Education and Health* and prioritize these across the institution's teaching, research, and service work.

TRU agrees and has committed to upholding these rights and calls to action. We are prioritizing them across all areas of institutional work, for example, creating institutional learning outcomes this year that will see all graduates develop demonstrable competence in knowledge of Indigenous peoples, culture, and practices. They will also be reflected in this year's institutional strategic planning process.

You further ask that TRU formalize concrete actions to demonstrate zero tolerance for anti-Indigenous sentiments and comments. We are doing this by implementing last year's Anti-Racism Task Force report and this year's initiative for a values-driven culture. We will do this with invitations for union members and students to engage and offer ideas and guidance.

I want to state definitively — I am firmly opposed to racial discrimination, hatred and intolerance in all its forms, especially anti-Indigenous racism. TRU will not tolerate, condone or accept racism from any in our community and will continue to take active steps to prevent and protect against it.

...2

Regarding the independent investigation of recent allegations of anti-Indigenous racism, the Board of Governors has committed to operating by the highest principles of empathy and procedural fairness as the investigation unfolds. The board's specially designed, thorough, trauma-informed and arm's length investigation expresses the care and seriousness the board brings to its responsibilities in this regard.

While those third-party investigations proceed, I am not in a position to remove any individual from their role based on what may be in the investigations, though individuals' responsibilities will routinely be adjusted to avoid perceptions of undue influence. We have implemented measures internally to ensure that no one at TRU needs to feel fearful in our work sites or classrooms. We are mindful of people's concerns and have taken steps to ease them.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate the sentiment expressed in the last sentence of your letter. I can assure you that I remain fully committed to "transforming TRU into a place of belonging and empowerment for all." These ideas are integral to our vision and mission, and I believe they will drive us forward in a direction we all want and expect.

Sincerely,



BRETT FAIRBAIRN
President and Vice-Chancellor

CC
Premier of BC
Minister of Advanced Education
Shuswap Nation Tribal Council
Union of BC Indian Chiefs
CAUT Director David Robinson
Federation of Post-Secondary Educators President Brent Calvert Sharon McIvor and
Justin Wilson FPSE-DRISC