

From: Jenna Woodrow <Jwoodrow@tru.ca>

Sent: Friday, November 26, 2021 1:58 PM

To: Brett Fairbairn (President) <President@tru.ca>

Subject: TRUFA Equity Committee Calls to Action in light of Investigation into Senior Administrators

Weytk Dear President Fairbairn,

Please find, attached hereto and copied below for your quick reference, a call to actions in light of the investigation into senior administrators from the TRUFA Equity Committee, the Gender Equity Committee, and the Decolonization, Reconciliation and Indigenization Standing Committee.

Our calls ask that TRU stand by its commitments to Decolonization, to Indigenization, and to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in its handling of the investigation into allegations of anti-Indigenous racism, bullying and harassment, and sexual harassment on the part of senior administrators.

Kukwstsétsemc—we thank you in advance for your care and attention to this matter.

Yours with respect and sincere hope for doing good,

Jenna Woodrow, Ph.D. (she/her)

Associate Teaching Professor

Philosophy, History and Politics

Thompson Rivers University, ne Secwepemcúl'ecw

Canadian Philosophical Association Equity Committee, Co-Chair

Canadian Philosophical Association Decolonizing and Indigenizing Committee, Co-Chair

Thompson Rivers University Faculty Association Equity Committee, Chair

Ethics Bowl Canada, Founding Member and Western Regional Director

*I respectfully acknowledge that I live and work on unceded territory of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc within Secwépemc'ulucw. I thank the Secwépemc Nation for their hospitality.
T7etsxem7nte re stselxmem*

Thompson Rivers University campuses are on the traditional lands of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc (Kamloops campus) and the T'exelc (Williams Lake campus) within Secwépemc'ulucw, the traditional and unceded territory of the Secwépemc. The region TRU serves also extends into the territories of the St'át'imc, Nlaka'pamux, Tšilhqot'in, Nuxalk, and Dakelh.

November 25, 2021

Dear Colleagues:

We, the Thompson Rivers University Faculty Association (TRUFA) Equity Committee call for

- The immediate suspension of Larry Philips and Matt Milovick pending the results of the Board of Governors' investigation into allegations of anti-Indigenous racism, bullying and harassment, and sexual harassment;
- Transparency of the Board's investigation processes and findings and concern for the safety and privacy of the complainants;
- An investigation into the involvement of President Fairbairn and John Sparks in the matters under investigation, including excessive use of non-disparagement agreements, and potential conflict of interest;
- For current Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion efforts, including the [Sexualized Violence policy \(BDR 25-0\)](#) and the [Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention policy \(BRD 17-0\)](#), and the eventual Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion office to be separate from People and Culture and have an independent governance structure;
- For TRU to undertake open processes of meaningful consultation with Faculty, Students, Staff, and members of the communities, and particularly members of equity-deserving groups, about the aims, responsibilities, and governance structure of the eventual EDI Office, as per [TRU's EDI Action Plan](#) and [TRU's Anti-Racism Taskforce Report](#), and
- For trauma-informed supports for the complainants, faculty, staff, and students to be paid for by TRU.

Further,

- We decry the insufficiency of President Fairbairn's Statement to the university for failing to acknowledge harm done to women, non-binary people, and BIPOC members of the TRU community, for failing to protect those for whom the infractions will be triggering, and for failing to provide sources of support to those for whom this will be harmful, and
- We decry the Board of Governor's statement for failing to empower the complainants.

We ground this response in empirically-informed good practices, in deep respect for the UNDRIP and TRC calls to action in education, and in [TRU's own vision statement](#)'s "redefinition of the university as a place of belonging KWE-SELT-KE-NEWS (we are all related and interconnected with nature, each other, and all things) — where all people are empowered to transform themselves, their communities, and the world," and commitment "To strengthen and honour relationships with Indigenous communities served by TRU."

An [ethics of care](#) dictates that persons in decision-making capacities owe an extra duty of care to those who are made vulnerable by their choices. The Board's decision to maintain the status quo employment for senior administrators Larry Philips, AVP People and Culture and Matt Milovick, VP Administration and Finance, represents a dereliction of that duty of care. The decision forces people who have claimed to be victims of anti-indigenous racism, victims of sexual harassment and victims of bullying to remain under the direct power of those they allege victimized them. The decision does nothing to protect the alleged victims; rather, it knowingly puts them, and others, in the way of possible harm. A refusal to acknowledge this possibility of harm is a form of [epistemic injustice](#) commonly suffered by members of equity-deserving groups: their claims suffer from a credibility deficit, while those in power's claims benefit from a credibility surfeit. Not only does this decision represent an epistemic injustice—harming

the complainants in their capacities as knowers and undermining their credibility—it also forces them to live and work in circumstances characterized by stress and fear. The decision not to place Larry Philips and Matt Milovick on leave while the investigation is underway protects the alleged perpetrators, not the alleged victims, and it prioritises the well-being of those in positions of power over the wellbeing of those who are under their power.

The decision also jeopardizes the integrity of the work in which Larry Philips and Matt Milovick are involved. For example, Larry Philips, as AVP People and Culture, is currently tasked with advancing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) at TRU and animating TRU's EDI Action Plan and Anti-Racism Taskforce Recommendations. The fact that he is doing so while there are unresolved allegations of harassment and sexual harassment against him jeopardizes fragile EDI work and breaks the trust requisite for the success of such efforts. Larry Philips currently holds the Responsible Officer position under both the [Sexualized Violence policy \(BDR 25-0\)](#) and the [Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention policy \(BRD 17-0\)](#). Larry Philip's formal role under these policies must be revoked immediately. In fact, it should have been revoked as soon as the allegations were heard by TRU. Matt Milovick is currently on the appointment committee for the new Provost. Here, again, there is a risk of harm that mandates the precautionary principle be put in play: TRU must act in ways that minimize the possible perpetuation of harm. His involvement also jeopardizes the success of this search as candidates who are women, transgender, non-binary or two-spirit and/or Indigenous and racialized may withdraw their applications or be more circumspect in the interview process.

In a similar vein, the announcement made by President Fairbairn, and the response in the media made by the head of the Board of Governors, Marilyn McLean, once again reveals concern for power and those in positions of power while ignoring the circumstances and needs of those in subordinate positions. Both emphasize concern for TRU's reputation and shows little regard for the many members of our communities who have experienced anti-indigenous racism, racism, sexual harassment, and bullying and harassment, and for whom the allegations will be triggering.

[TRU is also signatory to Dimensions Canada Charter](#), at least 2 articles of which speak directly to the responsibilities TRU's President and Board of Governors undertake in virtue of our commitment to that charter.

6. Advancing equity, diversity and inclusion is a shared responsibility that requires dedicated resources and strong leadership at all levels. Senior leadership demonstrates commitment through public endorsement, by ensuring the work involved is resourced and distributed fairly, and by *embedding changes in institutional governance and accountability structures*.

7. Issues of institutional and individual safety, trust, belonging, privacy and power differentials must be recognized and pro-actively addressed; this will be most successful when those impacted are directly engaged in defining the actions.

(Government of Canada 2019, Dimensions: equity, diversity and inclusion Canada, accessed Nov. 25, 2021, http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/EDI-EDI/Dimensions-Charter_Dimensions-Charte_eng.asp, emphasis added.)

We make the above calls with concern for justice and equity, and in consideration of TRU's antecedent commitment to Decolonization and Indigenization, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Please align

TRU's—please align *our*—actions with our commitments. Our calls ask that TRU stand by its commitments to Decolonization, to Indigenization, and to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, in its handling of the investigation into allegations of anti-Indigenous racism, bullying and harassment, and sexual harassment on the part of senior administrators.

With respect and a sincere hope of doing good,

[Kukwstsetsemc](#) (Thank You)

Jenna Woodrow (she/her), PhD, Associate Teaching Professor of Philosophy, Chair, TRUFA Equity Committee, Co-Chair, Canadian Philosophical Association Equity Committee, Co-Chair, Canadian Philosophical Association Decolonization and Indigenization Committee, and on behalf of the TRUFA Equity Committee

Dr. Kyra Garson, Intercultural Coordinator, Faculty of Student Development

Mahtab Nazemi, PhD, Assistant Professor, School of Education, Co-Chair of Gender Equity Committee, TRU Faculty Association.

Dr. Mónica J. Sánchez-Flores (she/her) Associate Professor of Sociology, Immediate Past-President of TRUFA, Past-Chair of the TRUFA Equity Committee, co-Chair of the CRC Equity Plan Committee and co-Chair of the TRU Anti-Racism Taskforce.

Mukwa Musayett, Associate Professor, Canada Research Chair in Indigenizing Higher Education, Chair of the Decolonization, Reconciliation and Indigenization Standing Committee

Dr. Verena Roberts, EdD, Instructional Designer, Open Learning, TRU

Wendy Hulko, PhD, MSW (she/her), Member, TRUFA Equity Committee, TRUFA Disability and Rehabilitation Management Representative

Important Note:

Student Case Managers are available to assist students who may be in need of support including navigating the [Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention policy \(BRD 17-0\)](#).

All members of the TRU Community may access support and guidance under the institutional [Sexualized Violence policy \(BRD 25-0\)](#).

November 25th began the annual 16-Day Campaign Against Gender Based Violence. The Office of Student Affairs will offer workshops and opportunities for members of the community to come together related to this issue.

Find out more about the [international campaign](#) and the [national campaign](#). The Office of Student Affairs will be active on the Faculty of Student Development social media channels here at TRU.

Please reach out to the Office of Student Affairs if you or others require assistance in accessing supports.