

February 14, 2018

Office of the President

1050 KANEFF TOWER
4700 KEELE ST.
TORONTO ON
CANADA M3J 1P3
T 416 736 5200
www.yorku.ca/president

**A Message from President Lenton and Professor Koleszar-Green
to the York Community**

York University acknowledges its presence on the traditional territory of the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Huron-Wendat, and the Métis. It is now home to many Indigenous peoples. We acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region.

Recently, many of us were struck by a court decision surrounding the tragic death of a young Indigenous man, Colten Boushie, in Saskatchewan. We wish to extend our deepest condolences to his family and to the York University community members grieving this loss.

We are deeply concerned about the implications of this decision for the ability of Indigenous peoples to receive justice within the current system. True healing will not be possible without honest reflection and action on systemic injustice and lack of equal opportunity for Indigenous peoples in Canada. As a post-secondary institution rich in diversity and with the strength of a large community, we can and must inform needed change regarding the criminal justice system.

York University is proud to embrace progressive values, and we are a community committed to social justice, inclusion and equity. Challenging societal norms and leading meaningful social change is in our DNA.

There is a role for everyone to play in fighting injustice and inequity alongside Indigenous peoples in all aspects of Canadian society. Systemic racism against and oppression of Indigenous peoples in Canada must end. As evidenced by the Truth and Reconciliation Report, Indigenous peoples have shown tremendous strength and courage in sharing their personal stories, including those of generational trauma and resilience, and in inviting all Canadians toward a better future.

We personally invite you to join our community at the following upcoming events to support and celebrate Indigenous culture, thought and expression, and to talk about how we as a university can do more to be part of true reconciliation, equality and healing:

- York University will host the 16th Annual All Nations Pow Wow & Gathering from February 15 – 17, organized by the Aboriginal Student Association of York University together with the Centre for Aboriginal Student Services. It will be a weekend of events dedicated to celebrating Indigeneity and academia. More information is available [here](#).



- The Indigenous Students Association at Glendon, in partnership with many campus partners, will host [The REDress Project](#) at York University's Glendon Campus this March 5-8th. You can take part in the project by contributing a red dress which will be used as part of an art installation to commemorate Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Red dresses will be collected at various locations on the Keele Campus from Feb. 1 to 26. More information is available [here](#).
- On March 20, 2018, Professor Ruth Koleszar-Green and Vice-Provost Alice Pitt will host a community engagement session at our Keele Campus to talk about York's [Indigenous Framework](#) and how we can embed the principles into our work, studies, and events, every day. This is the first of three engagement sessions. More information will be posted shortly.

Community members can learn more about how to access a robust schedule of training and education opportunities in support of rights, equity and inclusion. For more information, visit: <http://rights.info.yorku.ca/>

If you are a student and are experiencing grief or need support, please reach out to our Student Community Relations team at 416-736-5231, or the Student Counselling & Development team at 416-736-5297. For after-hours support, please call the 24/7 Good2Talk line at 1-866-925-5454.

If you are a staff or faculty member in need of support, [a number of resources are available to you](#), including the Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) at 1-800-268-5211.

As part of York's commitment to supporting Indigenous students, staff and faculty, last spring we established the renewed Skennen'kó:wa Gamig gathering space as a welcoming, safe and supportive space where Indigenous students, faculty and staff can come together in the spirit of Skennen'kó:wa (The Great Peace) to celebrate, and to share, knowledge and teachings. In part, Skennen'kó:wa Gamig serves as a cultural connection where relationships can be rebuilt. It is our hope that it is also a place where members of our community can find peace.

Sincerely,



Rhonda L. Lenton
President & Vice-Chancellor



Ruth Koleszar-Green
Special Advisor to the President on Indigenous Initiatives