NIUSLA
NATIONAL INDIGENOUS UNIVERSITY SENIOR LEADERS' ASSOCIATION



NIUSLA SUMMIT 2026

Gathering for Change: Dismantling Anti-Indigenous Racism in Post-Secondary Education

First Peoples' Gathering House, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC
November 3–4, 2026

SFU SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

FIRST NATIONS UNIVERSITY OF CANADA 50th ANNIVERSARY 1976-2026

UBC THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Cover Art

The cover artwork was created by **Tamia and Christopher Overes**, a father-and-daughter artist team from the səl̓ilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nation, whose collaborative practice brings together traditional Coast Salish teachings and contemporary artistic expression. Inspired by Coast Salish relationships to land, water, family, and resilience, the piece centers the inlet waters and coastal mountains that are integral to Tsleil-Waututh identity as the “People of the Inlet.” The cedar tree symbolizes strength, medicine, teachings, and cultural continuity, reflecting both community resilience and Tamia's personal journey through cancer. The orca represents family, guidance, and intergenerational connection, underscoring the meaningful partnership between father and daughter. Traditional Coast Salish design elements, including Salish eyes, trigons, crescents, and ovoids, flow throughout the composition, symbolizing the ongoing carrying and sharing of Indigenous knowledge. Together, the artists' work honours ancestral teachings while carrying Coast Salish stories forward into contemporary spaces.

FIRST NATIONS UNIVERSITY OF CANADA | 50th ANNIVERSARY 1976-2026

First Nations University of Canada (FNUniv) is honoured to host NIUSLA and support its ongoing work and collaboration.

In partnership with

mastercard foundation

NIUSLA is also supported through a partnership with the Mastercard Foundation’s EleV Program, which is helping advance FNUniv’s growth, sustainability, and long-term transformation grounded in the vision and values of Indigenous youth and communities.

We gratefully acknowledge the Canadian Race Relations Foundation and its National Anti-Racism Fund for supporting the 2026 NIUSLA Summit and helping advance national conversations on dismantling anti-Indigenous racism in post-secondary education.

Canadian Race Relations Foundation | Fondation canadienne des relations raciales

About NIUSLA

The National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association (NIUSLA) is a national network of Indigenous senior administrative leaders working to advance Indigenous priorities, leadership, and self-determination within Canada's post-secondary sector. Established in 2020 following an informal gathering of Indigenous leaders, NIUSLA was created to provide a dedicated forum for collaboration, strategic dialogue, knowledge sharing, and collective action. Since its inaugural meeting of seven members, the Association has grown to include 64 members from institutions across the country.

Governed by an Executive Committee and supported by a staff manager, NIUSLA is currently an unincorporated association funded through a multi-year Mastercard Foundation grant administered by First Nations University.

NIUSLA Executive Committee

- Dr. Christy R. Bressette – Western University (Co-Chair)
- Dr. Florence Glanfield – University of Alberta (Co-Chair)
- Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann – First Nations University of Canada
- Dr. Shauneen Pete – First Nations University of Canada
- Dr. Annie Pullen Sansfaçon, Université de Montréal
- Penina Sara-Lynn Harding, University of Northern BC

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the members of the Summit Planning Committee, staff, advisors, and volunteers whose commitment and contributions brought this gathering to life.

Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann, FNUniv
Dr. Shauneen Pete, FNUniv
Dr. Christy R. Bressette, Western
Dr. Darren Thomas, WLU
Dr. Florence Glanfield, UAlberta
Chris Lewis, SFU
Dr. Clifford Atleo, UBC
Dr. David Newhouse, Trent alum
Dr. Catherine Cook, UM alum
Gayle Bedard, KPU
Allison Beardsworth, UBC
Damara Jacobs-Petersen, UBC
Anthony Nickel, FNUniv
Maria Morrison, NIUSLA

In partnership with First Nations University of Canada
atim kâ-mihkosit (Red Dog) Urban Reserve
1 First Nations Way Regina, SK S4S 7K2
www.NIUSLA.ca

Welcome Remarks

Welcome relatives, colleagues, and friends.

We are honoured to host you on these lands as we gather to address one of the most pressing responsibilities facing post-secondary institutions today: confronting and dismantling anti-Indigenous racism.

We acknowledge that we meet on the unceded territory of the hən̓qəmin̓əm̓ and Sḵwx̱wú7mesh speaking peoples. We recognize and respect the rights of the kʷikʷəƛ̓əm (Kwikwetlem), səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh), Sḵwx̱wu7mesh Uxwumixw (Squamish) and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations that have called this place home since time immemorial. When we travel west to UBC, we will continue to be in the homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Peoples. We offer our respect and gratitude to these Nations and recognize their enduring presence, rights, and leadership.

This summit reflects a collective commitment to moving beyond awareness toward action. The conversations, relationships, and recommendations that emerge from this gathering have the potential to shape more equitable and accountable institutions for generations to come.

Thank you for joining us in this important work. We look forward to learning alongside you.

Chris Syeta'x̱tn Lewis
Indigenous Executive Lead
Simon Fraser University



Clifford Atleo
Senior Advisor and Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Affairs
University of British Columbia



Opening Remarks from NIUSLA

On behalf of the National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association (NIUSLA), we welcome you to the NIUSLA Summit 2026, Gathering for Change: Dismantling Anti-Indigenous Racism in Post-Secondary Education.

We gather at a time when denial of the truths of colonialism and residential schools, alongside overt and systemic anti-Indigenous racism, continues to cause harm. These are not abstract debates. They affect Indigenous students, faculty, staff, and communities, and they test whether post-secondary institutions are prepared to uphold truth and act on their commitments.

This Summit is an opportunity to speak honestly about that harm, examine how racism and denialism take hold within post-secondary education, and determine what our institutions must change. Dialogue matters, but it must lead to decisions, resources, accountability, and sustained action.

We thank Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia for hosting this gathering. We appreciate the generous support of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, the Mastercard Foundation, and First Nations University for this important work.

May our time together strengthen the relationships and resolve needed to uphold truth, confront anti-Indigenous racism, and build post-secondary institutions in which Indigenous Peoples are respected, supported, and able to thrive.

NIUSLA Co-Chairs

Dr. Christy R. Bressette
Vice-Provost & Associate Vice-President - Indigenous Initiatives, Western University



Dr. Florence Glanfield
Vice-Provost (Indigenous Programming & Research)
University of Alberta



First Nations University of Canada

On behalf of the First Nations University of Canada, administrative host of the National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association (NIUSLA), I am pleased to welcome you to the 2026 NIUSLA Summit.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Mastercard Foundation and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation for their generous support of this summit. We also thank our co-hosts, the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University, as well as the Elders, Knowledge Keepers, speakers, organizers, and participants whose contributions have made this gathering possible.

Thank you for joining us, and best wishes for a meaningful and productive summit.



Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann
President,
First Nations University of Canada

About the Summit

NIUSLA Summit 2026, Gathering for Change: Dismantling Anti-Indigenous Racism in Post-Secondary Education

The NIUSLA Summit 2026 brings together Indigenous leaders, educators, researchers, and changemakers from across Canada's post-secondary sector to advance collective action on dismantling anti-Indigenous racism in higher education. Through keynote presentations, panel discussions, sharing circles, and interactive learning experiences, participants will explore the barriers and opportunities that shape institutional change while strengthening relationships and networks across the country.

Grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, ceremony, and collective accountability, the Summit emphasizes practical learning and actionable outcomes. Participants will engage with leading voices in Indigenous education and leadership, examine promising practices, contribute to collaborative recommendations, and gain strategies, tools, and insights to support meaningful change within their institutions and communities.

A key outcome of the Summit will be the development of a final report that captures policy recommendations, promising practices, and foundational elements of a national framework for addressing anti-Indigenous racism in post-secondary education. ***Participants are encouraged to share their perspectives, reflections, and recommendations.***

Summit Elder

Sempulyan Stewart Gonzales *(they/them)*

Sḵwx̱wú7mesh/Musqueam from the Village of Eslh7an



I am a 65-year-old Indian Day School and Residential School survivor. I am a father of 3, grandfather of 13 and great great-grandfather of 13. I have lived a clean and sober life since April 3rd, 2007, attending a treatment centre on Vancouver Island, as well as Choices Seminars in July 2005, Givers 1 & Giver 2. This was the start of my healing journey. I have coached at Choices and now Break Free Seminars. I've attended Super Choices & Super Givers and through these personal growth seminars, I've learned to accept myself as a proud Two-Spirit man. I've gone back to college focusing my studies on Child & Youth Care, worked for 8 years with SN Ayas Menmen delivering cultural and language lessons to our youngest population of Squamish Nation, and providing the children with Squamish language and sign language together.

I am a member of our Syewen Winter Spirit dancing for 45 years and attended Sundance in Sioux Valley, South Dakota where I received my Sundance name – Eagleday from my Sundance grandfather, John Eagleday Sr. I've been a member of our Shaker Indian Church since June 1979. I was a Men's Traditional Dancer and travelled throughout Turtle Island along with my family.

Chen Kwenmantumi – I am grateful.

The Wellness Room is available to provide a quiet space that supports wellness, reflection, and personal care. Smudging is available.

Nail at the Door Entrance Teaching

This teaching invites all who enter the First Peoples' Gathering House with respect, humility, grace and good intentions. To symbolically hang your issues and negative thoughts on the nail at the door is a fundamental teaching of the Coast Salish Peoples. It reminds us to leave any feelings such as anger, hatred or bad intentions outside before entering and to enter with a clear mind, a good heart, and good intentions. In the Wet'suwet'en language, "New'h Git Stsii Wet Dewh ggiss" (Wet'suwet'en) and "nyewh gitsiy ats way dehw ggis" (Lake Babine) express the idea of leaving negativity or personal burdens outside. How we conduct ourselves inside is with respect for one another and the space we share.

Agenda

Tuesday, November 3, 2026

8:30 – 10:00	**Opening Ceremony & Remarks** Co-MC's: Chris Lewis & Damara Jacobs-Petersen Witnessing Ceremony Opening Remarks • Elder Sempulyan Stewart Gonzales • Dr. Joy Johnson, President and Vice-Chancellor of Simon Fraser University • Dr. Jacqueline Ottman, President of FNUniv • Dr. Christy R. Bressette, NIUSLA Co-Chair, Vice-Provost & AVP - Indigenous Initiatives, Western University
10-10:15	**Break**
10:15– 12:00	**Opening Keynote: The Policy is Only the Start** **Dr. Marcia Anderson, MD** *Vice-dean Indigenous health, social justice and anti-racism, Ongomiizwin – Indigenous Institute of Health and Healing at* University of Manitoba
12:00 – 1	Lunch
1-2:30	**Mapping Whiteness –** Dr. Sheelah McLean, *Dr. Gail Higginbottom, Katie Skelton and Yvette Ringham-Cowen*, *San'yas Indigenous-Specific Anti-Racism Training*
2:30 – 2:45	Break
2:45 – 4:30	**Mapping Whiteness,** *continued* **Leadership Reality Circle**
6:00 – 9:00	**Evening Reception at the Museum of Anthropology**, UBC *Bus departs from SFU for MOA following the day's sessions.*

Wednesday, November 4, 2026

8:30 – 9:00	**Morning Ceremony & Reflection**
9:00 – 10:15	**Keynote: Reflections on Four Decades of Teaching, Researching, and Publishing on Anti-Racist Education in the Academy** ***Dr. Verna St. Denis***
10:15 – 10:30	Break
10:30 – 12:00	**Strategies for Change: R*esidential School Denialism*** ***Facilitated by Dr. Clifford Atleo, UBC*** • Dr. Edana Beauvais, SFU • Dr. Mark Williamson, McGill University • Dr. Sean Carlton, University of Manitoba
12 – 1	Lunch – Greetings from the **Canada Race Relations Foundation**
1:00 – 1:45	**Indigenous-Specific Anti-Racism Policy Development** – BC Provincial Health Services Authority, Executive Director of Indigenous Health, Kevin Lowe
1:45 – 2:00	**RESPECT program** – Simon Fraser University Skel7áẇs, Naomi Narcisse, Director, Indigenous Initiatives, SFU
2:00 – 2:15	**Distinction between EDI and Indigenous** Dr. Asma-na-hi Antoine, Director, Indigenous Research, UBC
2:15 – 2:30	Break
2:30 – 3:30	**Applied Leadership Lab**
3:30 – 4:30	**Collective Output Session** National framework, Policy recommendations, Promising Practices
4:30 – 5:00	**Closing Circle & Witness Ceremony**

Keynote Speakers

“The Policy is Only the Start” by Dr. Marcia Anderson

> Anti-racism policies that define Indigenous-specific racism and have trauma-informed and culturally safe reporting pathways are necessary within post-secondary institutions and they are only the start of the work. The harder and more impactful parts of the work are the implementation of the policy and the aggressive and ambitious organizational culture change that will support the realization of these policies’ aspirational goals.

Dr. Marcia Anderson is Cree-Anishinaabe and grew up in the North End of Winnipeg with roots in Peguis First Nation and Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba. She practices Internal Medicine, and serves as the Vice-Dean, Indigenous Health, Social Justice and Anti-Racism in the Rady Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Manitoba. Dr. Anderson serves on multiple national Indigenous health and medical education committees and is a member of Health Workforce Canada’s Board of Directors.



Dr. Anderson has won multiple awards, including the 2022 Doctors Manitoba Physician of the Year award, the Lieutenant Governor’s Award for Excellence in Public Administration, and has been twice named one of the Top 100 Most Powerful Women in Canada by the Women’s Executive Network. Dr. Anderson was invested into the Order of Manitoba in 2024.

“Reflections on Four Decades of Teaching, Researching, and Publishing on Anti-Racist Education in the Academy” by Dr. Verna St. Denis

> Over four decades, anti-racist education in the academy has undergone significant changes in how it is understood, taught, researched, and received. Drawing on my experience as an Indigenous scholar and educator, I reflect on teaching anti-racism to students and senior leaders, and how social and institutional contexts shape engagement. This presentation explores the opportunities, tensions, and ongoing work of advancing anti-racist education in higher education.

Dr. Verna St. Denis, (PhD, Stanford) is Distinguished Professor Emerita at the University of Saskatchewan and a recipient of the 2025 King Charles III Coronation Medal. A member of Beardy’s and Okemasis First Nation, Treaty #6, she is a Cree and Métis scholar whose work focuses on Indigenous education, anti-racism, and decolonization. Dr. St. Denis taught courses in anti-racist education at the University of Sask. from 1992–2022. From 2021–2025, she served as Special Advisor to the President on Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression. Her research examines Indigenous education, Indigenous teachers, anti-racist teacher education, and Indigenous health research. She is the author of numerous scholarly publications, including *Silencing Aboriginal Education through Multiculturalism*, and co-editor of *White Benevolence: Racism and Colonial Violence in the Helping Professions*.



Sessions & Speakers

Mapping Whiteness *with Dr. Sheelah McLean*

The Mapping Whiteness session is an opportunity to examine how whiteness operates as a social and cultural norm in higher education. Indigenous leaders will be invited to share examples of whiteness through institutional policies, practices, and norms that position whiteness as neutral and authoritative, while marginalizing Indigenous knowledges, expertise and experiences. Emphasis will be placed on discussing whiteness as a system of power that shapes access, opportunities, and outcomes in higher education. Through this systems-focused approach of mapping, participants will identify opportunities to challenge settler-colonial norms, disrupt inequitable structures, and contribute to anti-racist environments.



Sheelah McLean is a third-generation white settler of Norwegian, Swedish, and Scottish ancestry who lives and works on Treaty 6 Territory in Saskatoon. Holding a B.A., B.Ed., M.Ed., and PhD in Education, her research focuses on interrogating whiteness in Canadian education systems. She taught in public education for 30 years, including high school, adult education, and anti-racism courses at the University of Saskatchewan.

An organizer with the Idle No More network, Sheelah's research and community work challenge settler colonialism and the ways white dominance is maintained in settler society. For the past nine years, she has served as a facilitator and curriculum developer for San'yas Indigenous-Specific Anti-Racism Training, an Indigenous-led initiative of BC's Provincial Health Services Authority that addresses Indigenous-specific racism in healthcare, education, child welfare, and other institutions.



T7ikw (Dr. Gail Higginbottom, EdD) is a Secwépemc (Esk'etemc First Nation) scholar-practitioner and systems leader advancing Indigenous-specific anti-racism, cultural safety, equity, and reconciliation. As Senior Director of San'yas Indigenous-Specific Anti-Racism Training at PHSA, she leads education initiatives that support systemic change in BC's health system. With over 30 years of experience, her work is grounded in Indigenous knowledge, relational accountability, and equitable outcomes for Indigenous Peoples.



Katie Skelton is an Anishinaabe kwe from Henvey Inlet First Nation and Senior Director of the San'yas Indigenous-Specific Anti-Racism Training Program at PHSA. She leads initiatives that advance Indigenous cultural safety and address Indigenous-specific racism in health systems. Katie holds an MBA in Indigenous Business Leadership from Simon Fraser University and serves on the board of the BC College of Oral Health Professionals.



Yvette Ringham-Cowan is a member of the Da'naxda'xw First Nation with Kwakwaka'wakw, Salish, Heiltsuk, and English ancestry. She is Director of Indigenous-Specific Anti-Racism Education at the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), where she leads efforts to address Indigenous-specific racism in health systems.

An experienced Indigenous health leader, educator, and facilitator, Yvette is also a PhD student in Indigenous Governance at the University of Victoria, researching how institutions can move beyond reconciliation rhetoric to meaningful anti-racist and Indigenous rights-based change.

Strategies for Change: Residential School Denialism

Facilitated by Dr. Clifford Atleo, UBC



Cliff Atleo is a Tsimshian (Kitsumkalum/Kitselas) and Nuu-chah-nulth (Ahousaht) scholar serving as Sr. Advisor and Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Affairs at UBC. In his research he is interested in how Indigenous communities navigate/adopt/resist neoliberal capitalism while working to sustain their unique cultural identities, worldviews, and ways of living. Cliff is particularly interested in how Indigenous leaders continue to assert agency within the confines of settler colonial politics and economics and work tirelessly to lead their communities in more sustainable directions.

Panelists:



Dr. Edana Beauvais is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at Simon Fraser University. Her research examines how social inequalities shape political communication, participation, and influence, with a focus on democratic innovation, gender and politics, and racial, ethnic, and settler-colonial politics.



Dr. Mark Williamson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at McGill University. As a settler researcher, his work investigates the origins of anti-Indigenous attitudes in the Canadian public, the politics of reconciliation, and strategies for better informing settlers about historical injustices.



Dr. Sean Carleton is a settler historian and Associate Professor of History and Indigenous Studies at the University of Manitoba. He is the author of *Lessons in Legitimacy: Colonialism, Capitalism, and the Rise of State Schooling in British Columbia* and co-editor of *Truth Before Reconciliation: Confronting Residential School Denialism.*

Policy Development & Presentations

Indigenous-Specific Anti-Racism Policy Development – BC Provincial Health Services Authority



Kevin Lowe is Executive Director of Indigenous Health at the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), where he leads policy, planning, and strategy initiatives focused on advancing Indigenous-specific anti-racism and Indigenous health.

A settler of Chinese descent, Kevin has held leadership roles with the First Nations Health Authority, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the federal government. He serves on the Vancouver Public Library Board and holds a Master of Public Administration from the University of Victoria and a Bachelor of Arts from Simon Fraser University.

RESPECT program – Simon Fraser University



Skel7áẇs, Naomi Narcisse, is a PhD student in Education at UBC and Director, Indigenous Initiatives at SFU. Guided by St'át'imc and Secwépemc teachings, mentors, Matriarchs, Ancestors, and traditional laws, she advances Indigenous education, cultural safety, equity, and anti-racism. Through her work and storytelling, she shares perspectives on the connections between land, language, education, and Indigenous knowledge systems. She also leads SFU's RESPECT program, providing cultural safety and anti-racism training for university employees.

Distinction between EDI and Indigenous – UBC



Dr. Asma-na-hi Antoine has more than 20 years of experience advancing Indigenous-focused and Indigenous-engaged research in post-secondary institutions. As Director, Indigenous Research at UBC, she provides strategic leadership for Indigenous research, fostering respectful and reciprocal partnerships between Indigenous communities and researchers while strengthening Indigenous research governance, ethics, and engagement across the research lifecycle.

Evening NIUSLA Summit Reception

Tuesday, November, 3, 2026

6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Join us for an evening of networking, conversation, and cultural engagement at the renowned **UBC Museum of Anthropology (MOA)**, located on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territory of the Musqueam people. For attendee convenience, a ***charter bus*** will depart SFU shortly after 4:30 PM, making a brief stop at the Executive Plaza Hotel before proceeding to the reception at MOA.

Guests will have the opportunity to connect with colleagues and summit participants in one of Canada's most celebrated cultural spaces. The MOA Curatorial Team will be available throughout the evening to provide access to exhibitions and share insights into the collections.

UBC Museum of Anthropology
6393 NW Marine Drive,
Vancouver, BC

Food & Refreshments:
Enjoy a catered reception featuring Indigenous cuisine provided by **Salmon n' Bannock**, Vancouver's premier Indigenous restaurant. A cash bar will also be available.
Please note that food and beverages are permitted only in the Lobby, Courtyard Room, Haida House, and outdoor Courtyard spaces.

Reception Format

- Informal networking and relationship building
- Access to select museum exhibitions
- Opportunities to connect with Indigenous leaders, scholars, and community partners

Accessibility
The Museum of Anthropology is committed to providing an accessible experience for all visitors. The building features step-free access throughout most public spaces and includes:

- Accessible washrooms
- Three accessible parking spaces located near the entrance
- Complimentary wheelchairs available for visitor use
- Seating throughout the museum, including portable gallery chairs
- Marked accessible routes for visitors using wheelchairs or mobility devices

For more information about the Museum of Anthropology, visit: https://moa.ubc.ca/about-moa/

Welcome to the sx̌exənew̓txʷ / Tl’e7enḵáw̓txw, First Peoples’ Gathering House

xʷtaləl̓əm ʔə x̌ səlta4 sme:nt / Xwta7ltáw̓txw tl’a Lhekw̱’lhúkw̱’aytn

Simon Fraser University, Burnaby Campus

The Gathering House has its own unique, Indigenized protocols and responsibilities for how the space is cared for and used. These are grounded in respect for the House itself, for each other, and for the lands the House rests upon. We ask that all guests conduct themselves with respect for the space, its artwork, protocols, and those in the space.

Care and Respect for the House Posts

The House Posts are living ancestors and should be honoured with the utmost care and reverence. They are not to be touched, or leaned on, but instead recognized for their deep cultural significance and spirit.

Location

The First Peoples' Gathering House is located across from Strand Hall and east of the Trottier Observatory. Enter through the main entrance located on the north side of the building, near the bus loop.

