

November 14, 2017

Dear students, faculty and staff,

Over the next 12 days, two “awareness weeks” are happening back-to-back on campus — each featuring a unique array of cultural activities, gatherings, lectures, presentations and other special events that promote two common themes: diversity and inclusivity.

[Western International Week](#) (Nov 13-17) and [Indigenous Awareness Week](#) (Nov 20-26) both provide opportunities to learn about the ethnic heritage and history of the people who make up our increasingly heterogeneous campus community.

In addition to the social and educational programming these special occasions offer to enrich our understanding of the world and one another, they also give us pause to reflect upon our personal biases and challenge ourselves to work more purposefully in creating a supportive and equitable society for all.

Western takes great pride in attracting students, faculty and staff from across the country and around the world, all with a view toward developing “the global citizens and leaders of tomorrow.” In fact, our commitment to diversity and “welcoming the world to Western [by ensuring] that our enrolment, employment and advancement processes are open, unhindered and free of barriers” is formally enshrined as a principle underpinning the University’s 2014 strategic plan, [Achieving Excellence on the World Stage](#).

So, too, does our strategic plan officially commit us to the institutional goal of “improving accessibility and success in higher education for Indigenous peoples.”

Currently, 4,300 international students from 127 countries call Western their home away from home. Our efforts to “internationalize” Western in recent years have achieved much success and [taken many forms](#), including the growth and development of international learning opportunities in partnership with 135 institutions in 39 countries.

Meanwhile, another 450 Western students are members of First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities whose ancestors called “Turtle Island” home centuries before “Canada” was even founded as a nation. Our work to “indigenize” campus is far more nascent than our internationalization efforts, but progress is being made.

For example, our dedicated staff in [Indigenous Services](#) provide a wide range of specialized programming to support Indigenous student success. As well, last fall our Senate and Board unanimously approved the University’s first-ever [Indigenous Strategic Plan](#), which outlines eight broad strategic directions for how Western can play a bigger role in addressing Indigenous inequity and under-representation in Canada’s postsecondary education system.

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And to help translate the plan's goals and priorities into action, the [Provost's Task Force on the Implementation of the Indigenous Strategic Plan](#) has been working to fulfill its mandate for the past several months.

Looking ahead, there is clearly still much hard work to be done to further internationalize and indigenize our campus community. Western's increased efforts on both fronts reflect broader national trends — particularly with regard to Indigenous initiatives, and particularly within the context of the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#) and its [Calls to Action](#). As more and more postsecondary institutions across Canada step up to address these challenges, Western seeks to be among those that are leading the way.

Everyone has a role to play. We encourage you to inform yourself and take advantage of the opportunities to participate in the awareness weeks' activities ahead — and to lend an ongoing hand in making Western a welcoming, supportive and inclusive place to study and work for all members of our campus community.

Sincerely,



Amit Chakma
President & Vice-Chancellor



Janice Deakin
Provost & Vice-President (Academic)