



**TO:** Mike Mahon  
President and Vice Chancellor

**DATE:** August 5, 2014

**FROM:** Robert A. Boudreau  
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

**RE:** Department of Native American Studies, Academic Quality Assurance Review

In accordance with the U of L *Academic Quality Assurance Policy and Process*, the Academic Quality Assurance Committee approved the review of the Department of Native American Studies at its March 28, 2014 meeting.

The Program Review Committee for this review was comprised of Yale Belanger (Program Review Coordinator), Henrie Beaulieu, and Linda Many Guns. The review produced four documents:

1. *Quality Assurance Review (2013): Native American Studies* (received June 14, 2013) – Self Study Report developed by the Department of Native American Studies Self Study Committee.
2. *Report of the Review Committee for the Native American Studies Department, University of Lethbridge* (received December 18, 2013) – External Review Report by David Newhouse (Trent University) and Winona Wheeler (University of Saskatchewan), based on their site visit of September 19-20, 2013.
3. *Native American Studies, Quality Assurance Review: Response to External Reviewers Report* (received February 13, 2014) – response of the Self Study Committee to the external review.
4. *Dean's Response to the Quality Assurance Review of Native American Studies* (received March 24, 2014) – response to the review, written by Craig Cooper, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

---

• All documents are available upon request.

• Since the Dean's Response, one faculty member has been hired on a limited term. The goal is to complete the hiring of a full tenure-track position for 2015-16.

## **Self Study**

The Self Study Report made the following general observations about the Native American Studies (NAS) department:

- The department has a limited number of program majors. There is a need to increase student interest in the NAS major.
- The cross-disciplinary field of NAS is dynamic, and the department must adapt so it can stay relevant to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) students, potential employers, and local communities.

The report listed several future plans for the department:

- Recruit two faculty positions immediately, to alleviate curricular and faculty pressures.
- Target recruitment and retention to increase enrolment in the NAS major and in NAS courses.
- Increase student interest in the department by working with the Native American Student Association to improve cross-disciplinary learning opportunities. These opportunities could include: more teaching opportunities with elders and experts from the community and other departments and faculty; workshops; and mentorship programs.
- Find innovative ways to interface with FNMI and non-FNMI students.
- Restructure the NAS curriculum to strengthen the practical components of NAS programs.

The following concerns were noted in the report:

- Depth and breadth in NAS courses.
- The number of core courses and available instructors.
- Enrolment size and applicant pool quality.
- Hiring new and academically-qualified faculty.
- Optimal course sequencing.
- Limited resources.
- Advancing faculty teaching and research.
- Graduate teaching.
- NAS concentrations.

The report recorded the major strengths of the department:

- Surveys find that students are satisfied with the department and its programs.
- The department has historical significance as Alberta's first Native studies department.
- The department plays an important role in informing contemporary political understanding of FNMI issues.
- There are small, intimate class settings that help build relationships and reduce student anxiety.
- There is a committed group of faculty that have an impressive and growing research profile.

- There is a consistent student base, which includes students from Red Crow College on the Kainai Nation.

Several weaknesses and threats were recorded in the report:

- At other institutions, several programs and departments have emerged that compete with NAS programs. For example: U of A's Faculty of Native Studies; UBC Okanagan's Native Studies program; and Brandon University's Native Studies Department.
- The department only attracts a limited number of students from outside Alberta.
- The department has suffered a shortage of faculty since 2008. In 1980 there were six faculty to teach less than 20 courses. Now there are four faculty members to teach 28 regularized courses.
- The rich intellectual history of the department has been de-emphasized because of a need to focus more on teaching due to the shortage of faculty members.

### ***External Review***

The External Review Report noted that, though the U of L's Department of Native American Studies was once at the forefront of its discipline in Canada, the viability of the department is now in question.

The report noted several strengths of the NAS department:

- NAS classes show strong enrolment.
- Most students are satisfied or very satisfied with their academic experiences in NAS.
- Graduates have moved into a range of career areas and most agreed that their program prepared them well for their career paths.
- Students are very satisfied with academic advising.
- The department had a 93% retention rate from 2006 to 2012.
- Learning outcomes align with the NAS operating principles.
- Students are satisfied with the supports they receive and student services are well used.
- The involvement of elders and community leaders enriches the learning environment. The elders program is well-regarded and supports all students in the department.
- Surveys show that students hold NAS instructors in high regard.
- Faculty members consistently receive a significant number of research grants.
- Faculty members are engaged in community-based research and community service.
- Faculty are actively involved in Native American Student Association activities, especially Native Awareness Week.
- University peers across Canada hold the NAS department in high esteem. Faculty are well respected in their cognate disciplines.
- The new FNMI centre provides an opportunity to make the department more visible.
- Program resources are adequate and well used.

The report discussed the following concerns and areas for improvement:

- Retiring faculty members have not been replaced, which means the department struggles to deliver the core curriculum. There are more courses in the curriculum than the current faculty complement can teach.
- Department growth has been hindered by its reliance on an external Acting Department Head who is unable to fully commit their time to the position.
- Significant curriculum renewal is needed, including course revisions and new courses. The curriculum does not reflect new scholarship and ideas in the discipline.
- The role of the department in the new FNMI centre needs to be defined.
- The department does not have a vision or mission statement, and the operating principles are outdated.
- Lack of office space use by faculty members and the location of support staff away from the NAS area impacts collegiality.
- The out-of-the-way location of the department creates a sense of separation.
- The Library's course on information literacy, developed for the First Nations Transition Program, is underused by NAS students.

The following 14 recommendations for improvement were stated in the report:

1. Form an advisory committee of local FNMI community leaders, and task this group with developing a vision, mission, and strategic development plan for NAS in collaboration with faculty members. Ensure this plan has the same categories as the Academic Plan: Supporting the Student Experience; Leadership in Learning; and Creating a Community of Leaders.
2. Review the curriculum, in collaboration with the proposed advisory committee, to ensure it meets the needs of local FNMI communities and organizations, and that it aligns with faculty research interests.
3. Review the theme areas within NAS and ensure they are relevant to local needs and developments in the discipline. In this review, pay particular attention to the indigenous humanities (literature, language, performance, art, media) and indigenous research methods and theory.
4. In the curriculum review, consider additional ways of meeting the language requirement.
5. Develop courses on urban environments and/or include issues related to urban environments in existing courses.
6. Consider delivering some courses at the Calgary and Edmonton campuses, where there are large urban FNMI populations.
7. Consider cross-listing courses with significant FNMI content from other departments.
8. Develop a plan for hiring at least two additional full-time faculty members.
9. As soon as possible, hire a senior faculty member to act as department head.
10. Boost the number of adjunct or associate faculty members external to NAS to support the program.
11. Return the office of the administrative support person to the NAS area.
12. Consider moving the department to a more central location or into the new FNMI centre.

13. Develop a five-year student recruitment and retention plan. Involve the proposed advisory committee in developing this plan.
14. Develop a promotional campaign to highlight the knowledge and skills of NAS graduates and the contributions the program has enabled graduates to make to their communities.

The following additional recommendations, stated in the conclusion of the report, were presented as the minimum necessary for improving the NAS department:

- Ensure the NAS Department meets regularly to address departmental business and to strengthen collegiality. Developing a strategic plan will be the top priority.
- Return the Chairship of the department to an NAS faculty member.
- Return the administrative assistant to the NAS office area.
- Hire additional tenure-track faculty to create a full-time faculty complement of at least five.
- Ensure the University acknowledges the contributions, expertise, and value of the NAS faculty, and invite them to participate in all FNMI activities on campus.

### ***Program Response***

In their response to the External Review Report, the Self Study Committee noted that they agree with the 14 recommendations from the report, and re-emphasized that resource constraints must be addressed to ensure the department's continuing success.

### ***Dean's Response***

The Dean's Response began by noting that many of the 14 recommendations from the External Review Report can only be successfully implemented with fundamental changes to the department. The response then detailed seven recommendations:

1. Create an NAS Advisory Committee, comprised of leaders from local FNMI communities, Native American Studies faculty members, and three to four senior faculty from other departments who have an interest in Native American Studies.
2. Have the NAS Advisory Committee develop a vision, mission, and strategic plan for the department.
3. Have the NAS Advisory Committee review and update the departmental curricula. Ensure this review addresses four areas: (i) meeting the needs of the local community; (ii) indigenous humanities; (iii) language requirements; and (iv) urban environments.
4. Explore the teaching of Native American Studies in Calgary and Edmonton only when the first three recommendations are completed.
5. At the Faculty level, establish a policy framework for cross-listing courses in Arts and Science.
6. Complete the hiring of one new full-time faculty member.

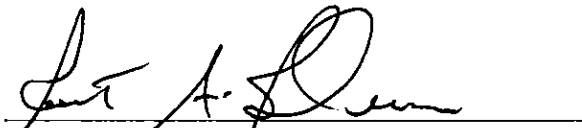
---

Since the Dean's Response, one faculty member has been hired on a limited term. The goal is to complete the hiring of a full tenure-track position for 2015-16.

7. Regarding adjunct and associate members of the department:
  - a) Make the Director of the First Nations Transition Program a cross-appointed member of the department.
  - b) Have the faculty members that are appointed to the NAS Advisory Committee serve as associate members of the department for the duration of their term on the committee.
  - c) Explore cross-appointments when new hires become available in other departments.
  
8. After the NAS Advisory Committee is established and fully functioning:
  - a) Initiate a broader discussion on the physical location of the department.
  - b) Develop a departmental recruitment and retention plan.
  - c) Develop a promotional campaign in partnership with the Dean's office and University Advancement.

The Academic Quality Assurance Committee is satisfied that the Department of Native American Studies academic quality assurance review has followed the U of L's academic quality assurance process appropriately, and acknowledges the successful completion of the review.

Sincerely,



Robert A. Boudreau

Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

Cc: Andrew Hakin, Provost and Vice President (Academic)

---

Since the Dean's Response, internal discussions have modified this goal to hiring a new Director for the FNTP and determining if they can be an Associate Member of the NAS Department.