

**simon fraser**  
**student society**

**SFSS BOARD  
OF DIRECTORS  
SEMESTER  
REPORT**



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## Executive Summary

Oki, Niitaniko (Hello, My name is) Matthew Provost, I am this year's VP Student Services of the SFSS! I am really grateful for the work I have been given the opportunity to do at the SFSS and am really stoked to work with amazing board members and the society staff.

This past summer I have been chairing the nominating committee as well as co-chairing the Black, Indigenous, & People of Colour committee. I have been working towards ensuring our services are supporting students. I have also been working in collaboration with other board members and within working groups to ensure that students and our most vulnerable members are being supported throughout this difficult time.

Being an Indigenous student at SFU I have noticed many gaps within the society, as well as the university I have made it a priority to work towards equity, diversity and inclusion goals being met to my capacity in the position I have been elected in. Reconciliation projects have been a huge goal I have throughout my term. Also amplifying marginalized voices has also guided my work and something I am very proud to mention is the establishment of the BIPOC committee. Currently I am looking forward to seeing the Orange Shirt Campaign that will be running from September 28th to October 2nd which commemorates the Indigenous Residential School Survivors. Another project I have been really excited to see happen is the Food Hub and also Surrey Farm to campus. I have always wanted to see more support for students at Surrey campus, I think it's important to have equal support among all campuses. Especially with Covid-19 that definitely showed where we as a society and as a board need to build better student support.

This summer semester has definitely been different and we as a board have adjusted to working remotely while still doing our best to provide support to our membership. A recommendation I would like to suggest would be to have better boundaries about work hours. I have found myself working around the clock some days, especially early in my term.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the current board of directors, thank you to our membership, I will continue to work diligently to ensure you are receiving what you need. Please feel free to reach out as well as to make recommendations on what you need from our society. This could not be done without you.

## **Completed Projects:**

### **BIPOC Committee:**

At this beginning of the summer semester I was able to write up the Terms of Reference for the Black Indigenous, People of Colour committee. It was my goal to create a space within the SFSS for BIPOC folks to advise and ensure there was meaningful action that comes from racialized voices on campus. The committee started meeting in early July and from there a lot of calls to actions and campaign support has been brought through this committee already, I am excited to see what we will be working on throughout the Fall semester.

My goal for this committee was to ensure that BIPOC voices were being amplified as well as proper representation on a committee level. This is also the first time the SFSS has had a committee specifically created to ensure BIPOC voices are visible. This committee was intended to also work with First Nations Student Association and Students of Caribbean and African Ancestry to hopefully undo the harm that has been caused in the past. This committee works towards supporting and advocating for BIPOC students on campus.

We have been working hard to find ways to support students especially remotely. We know that Covid-19 disproportionately impacts BIPOC communities in various ways and early on we were trying to figure out how to support community members in a good way. Currently the BIPOC committee is working with Health and Counselling Services to make recommendations on how to support BIPOC students more adequately. As well as ensuring BIPOC students feel safe and that the services provided by HCS are safe and supportive.

We have also discussed how to ensure and hold accountability to the university on anti-racism work, as well as ensure that equity, diversity and inclusion are not done in performative or harmful ways.

### **BIPOC Committee Terms of Reference link below:**

<file:///Users/user/Downloads/BIPOC%20Committee%20TOR.pdf>

### **FNSA Coordinator:**

Throughout the summer we were able to finalize the hiring of the First Nations Student Association coordinator. Due to Covid the FNSA Coordinator was not able to start but we were able to finish the letter of offer. The coordinator was able to start just before the Fall semester.

This position was essential to building and supporting the Indigenous community here at SFU and within the SFSS. We wanted to do our best for reconciliation efforts to ensure that we were able to maintain good relations. This position is also integral to the FNSA's health as an overall association, as a previous board member I wanted to ensure this position was filled because the burn out and expectation among Indigenous students is difficult. I wanted to ensure that we are not burdening marginalized students when they already have so much on their plates.

I am really excited to be a part of this board term because I get to witness the hiring and completion of the FNSA coordinator because I know that Indigenous students and the FNSA community have been advocating for this for many many years.

## **Farm to Campus:**

As my portfolio covers services and in response to supporting students I wanted to help support a program and take the lead to help get this project going from the society's perspective. Farm to Campus is a service that provides current SFSS membership to accessible produce to help combat food insecurity.

Farm to Campus is based in Surrey and as one of my campaign promises I wanted to ensure that we have equal services among all campuses. I found that Surrey is underserved in many aspects to services in the SFSS. The Farm to Campus Initiative was a collaborative effort between Surrey Campus, Embark and the SFSS.

The SFSS allocated \$1500.00 to the program for students in the Surrey area to access affordable produce from local farmers. The program is run on donations but from our contribution this allowed for SFSS members to pay on a sliding scale. This program is currently running on Wednesdays and you are able to sign up online here:

<https://www.embarksustainability.org/programs/farm-to-campus/>

The program will be ongoing and I will bring more updates in my Fall Semester Report as well.

<https://the-peak.ca/2020/09/sfu-offers-sustainability-program-to-bring-fresh-produce-to-students/>



## **Indigenous Student Centre Board Development Session:**

In part of ensuring reconciliation efforts are met in the society it is key that we build proper relationships with Indigenous groups on campus to ensure we are doing proper consultative work. Building relationships with community members is essential to ensuring reconciliation efforts are done in a genuine way. This was also an opportunity for the board of directors to ask questions and become informed of services that Indigenous Student Centre Provides for Indigenous students here at SFU.

The Indigenous Student Centre is one of the main hubs of support for Indigenous students at SFU. I took the opportunity and initiative to invite ISC for a development session so we had the opportunity to talk first hand about how the SFSS could properly begin to support and advocate for Indigenous students. The board asked questions around protocol and services ISC provides, I think this development session was helpful since it brought another perspective on how we need to expand in order to support different student groups.

I hope that this development session can be the beginning of future boards maintaining these connections because this will set precedence for future work and the continuing collaboration efforts that will be happening this year.



## Indigenous Day:

I am really thankful for having the opportunity to speak out on and recognize these events within the society. Annually on June 21st this is National Indigenous Day, this day we recognize Indigenous folks across Turtle Island (Canada). We take this day to celebrate Indigenous excellence and the diversity of our people.

As an Indigenous student I have not seen myself properly represented in the SFSS and I took this as an opportunity to ensure we recognize Indigenous students and take the time to recognize and acknowledge these important dates. I hope that moving forward the future board of directors will keep these ongoing because this is how we ensure that Indigenous students feel recognized and supported by our student society.

“The SFSS would like to celebrate and acknowledge that it is National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21st). The SFSS prioritizes Indigenous voices, and we acknowledge that the SFSS is located on the traditional, unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples, including the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əy̓əm (Musqueam), S<sup>k</sup>wx̌wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), Sel̓ílwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh), k<sup>w</sup>ik<sup>w</sup>əł̓əm (Kwikwetlem) and q̓icəy̓ (Katzie) Nations. We want to acknowledge that this is a day to recognize and celebrate Indigenous people all over Turtle Island. We would like to also say congratulations to the Indigenous Graduates of 2020 and recognize your hard work and perseverance throughout your academic journey.

The SFSS recognizes the significance of Indigenous presence on campus as well as the hard work and advocacy of the Indigenous communities that are at SFU. We hope students, faculty, and staff take this opportunity to learn and work towards reconciliation efforts. We hope you take the time to learn with open hearts and open minds, the SFSS is working towards supporting Indigenous students and ensuring that we are allowing that space so we can continue to support and work together in a good way.

Happy Indigenous People's Day!”





## **On-going Projects:**

### **Food Hub & Farm to Campus:**

Food Hub on the SFU Burnaby campus was started as a pilot project in response to the Emergency Response Working Group to help support students through the Covid-19 Pandemic. We have seen how this has benefitted students over the Summer semester and how the need is growing throughout the Fall semester. This project will be under review to assess the need for this service.

As part of my portfolio this will become a priority to assess and hopefully extend this project for students especially throughout these precarious times. I think more services that alleviate barriers and also give students the opportunity to access affordable food sources are needed especially during the ongoing pandemic.

The Farm to Campus initiative will also be a continuation of a collaboration between the SFSS and Surrey campus and Embark. We will be meeting soon to discuss and see how SFSS can continue to support students on the Surrey campus to alleviate food insecurity.

In both of these projects we have prioritized the protection of Board members and volunteers with risks to Covid-19 we have created safety guidelines and also made sure we have personal protective equipment made available.

### **Actions Items:**

- Assess the needs of how these services have alleviated food insecurity
- Reach out to students to see how essential these services are to student wellbeing
- Discuss how we can make these services better or if there are areas we need work on to better accommodate make more accessible
- More outreach and also more opportunities for volunteers to be apart of these projects



## **First Nations Student Association consultation:**

### **Ratifications of the SFSS/ FNSA agreement:**

I have taken the lead on this project, due to the increase of workload of classes and also focus on the Annual General Meeting I have been unable to solely focus on making the adjustments to the agreement over the summer semester but definitely is an ongoing conversation to ensure that this agreement is finalized and signed. As the SFSS we are maintaining constant conversation with the FNSA and working to ensure we are maintaining transparency as well as support to the FNSA board. I am hoping to have this agreement finalized mid October since this conversation came up earlier this summer.

### **FNSA and BIPOC Committee:**

When drafting the BIPOC terms of reference I ensured that FNSA was a key member of this committee to ensure they had 2 seats for Indigenous students. They play an integral role in the advocacy process and increasing representation within the SFSS has been a priority of mine.

### **FNSA and Council:**

I was able to introduce the new FNSA Board of Directors to the Chair and Vice Chair of council, from this point forward the FNSA seat on council has been filled.

Support for the FNSA from the SFSS will be ongoing but I am excited to say that after so long we are beginning to see a strong relationship and increased participation of Indigenous students in the society. I also want to thank the FNSA board for doing amazing work for the community and ensuring that your voices are heard and amplified.



## **Reconcili-Action Items:**

### **Host Nations:**

As part of my campaign promises I am doing my best to work towards and push reconciliation efforts within the SFSS. I have been working towards connecting with Host Nations:

x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əy<sup>ə</sup>m (Musqueam), Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), Selilwitulh (Tseil-Waututh)

This is an essential and first step towards ensuring we are doing work in a good way. Connecting and consulting with the Host nations should be prioritized since the SFSS is located on occupied stolen territory.

### **Action Items:**

- Draft a letter the Board of Directors can sign off on to introduce our board to the Host nations Chief and Councils
- Ensure proper consultation is mandated for future events and ongoing projects
- See how we can build relationships with Host nations to better support Indigenous students from these territories

### **Resources:**

I have been compiling and researching resources for our Board of Directors and Staff for proper cultural competency for adequate resources to better support Indigenous students. This list is ongoing and hopefully will have a comprehensive list that can educate and support any questions folks may have about Indigenous issues and proper relationship building

### **Relationships with Indigenous Groups on Campus:**

I have taken initiative to build relationships with Indigenous groups on campus and introduce the new Board of directors to these groups to ensure proper relationships. These will be ongoing and there will be many opportunities to collaborate with these groups on campus for campaigns and events.

### **Awareness and Campaigns:**

I have taken the lead to amplify Indigenous campaigns and specific days such as Indigenous day to bring more awareness to the importance of Indigenous peoples and students. This will be an ongoing process and project.

## **Health and Counselling Services Collaboration:**

Early in the summer semester I reached out to discuss collaborative opportunities with SFU Health and Counselling Services. Mental health is an essential part to ensuring students' wellbeing are taken into consideration. The Covid-19 pandemic has definitely taken a toll on many students and added a great deal of stress to our already precarious situations and lives as undergraduates. I reached out in hope of finding ways to open up the conversation of self care and working with HCS to better understand and support the student experience.

### **SFSS and HCS Promotional Material:**

I am working on creating promotional materials for mental health resources in collaboration with HCS. This includes making students more aware of the services we have access to through health and counselling. I am also wanting to create a campaign to de-stigmatize mental health and hopefully raise awareness about mental health support and how this is an important part in your overall health. I want to normalize the conversation of asking for support and hopefully students will feel comfortable accessing more services.

I have also been working with HCS to provide a board development session in order to better support the board of directors to focus on wellness in leadership roles.

### **Support Groups:**

With ongoing conversations with HCS I was able to bring up the need for additional support that needs to be offered and how we can collaborate to bring in support groups or hopefully wellness focused courses for students. Also to bring in people of colour to support BIPOC students.

### **Off Campus Resources:**

I believe that wellness and mental health support can come in various forms. I am working towards compiling resources so that SFU HCS can update their website for services and resources that students can access online. For myself I found that you can support in many ways and wellness can take on various forms. I am doing my best to hopefully find resources that can support students in various aspects whether this be off campus support or self guided support.

### **HCS x BIPOC Committee:**

The BIPOC committee is currently working with HCS on recommendations for how to better BIPOC students and wellness. We are focusing on cultural competency as well as ongoing consultation and monthly check in with HCS to hold accountability on these initiatives.

## **Pain Points:**

### **Working Remotely:**

As a new board member in the midst of a global pandemic I definitely feel working remotely has definitely had its moments. I have found myself sometimes lacking concentration and also disassociating in meetings from time to time. I have been doing my best to prioritize tasks through an online environment but this has been a learning curve for myself.

I can say I have spent more than 10 hours on my computer. Some days I did not realize the toll it was taking and this was due to coping to the “new normal” for all of us on the board. Increased screen time has been new for me, all my work that happens in my role is online and constant communication through technology has been overwhelming for me sometimes. Moving to a remote environment (my living room) some days were incredibly difficult. As well as taking online classes I feel as though I'm only looking at screens. I had to adjust and find ways to cope to pay attention in meetings and some days I felt like I just could not sit at my desk in meetings anymore. I also can say that I wish our current board had the opportunity to work all together and lack of interaction with my co-workers has been an adjustment in itself.

### **Self Care:**

This is something I am learning and is an ongoing process, the increase and anxiety that has come from Covid on top of many other things has made me realize the importance of ensuring I prioritize self care. I will be completely honest some days I really struggle trying to cope and I have a lack of motivation to sometimes get small tasks done. What I will say though this pandemic has really opened my eyes especially while working full and also being a student my capacity is so essential to my everyday life. As a student we are already expected to keep a busy schedule and with this role I am truly doing my best to set out the goals I have set for myself while in this role. I am very lucky to have many supports that I access and this will be something I continue to do because I am learning to take care of myself. I was once told if you do not take the time to take care of yourself it will affect your ability to help and support others.

### **Imposter syndrome:**

As a person of colour and an Indigenous person I have been dealing with imposter syndrome a bit. Whether this be doubting my ability or not meeting expectations I am really working towards ensuring that People of colour in the student society deserve a place here. Since I have been here at SFU I have never seen an Indigenous on the board of directors for the SFSS and I feel I have a big responsibility to my community. Representation is such an important aspect to feeling like you belong and I am really thankful this year's board and our staff for the support they have provided me. Overcoming and unlearning the systemic barriers placed

on BIPOC people is real and myself and other BIPOC folks on this board are breaking that systemic cycle. Thank you for this opportunity and allowing me to share space.

## **Recommendations:**

1. Ask for help, there's no shame in needing support. Whether this be for work, school, of your personal life it's important to know that you deserve to be supported. Throughout this whole process I have received a lot of help (S/O to Corbett for the extension), I have checked in with folks and they have checked in with me. I am thankful for those opportunities because sometimes we just need someone to run an idea by or just some to listen.
2. Try different ways to build habits and schedules. I never really was someone who had a set routine but I found that balancing many tasks and roles especially within the SFSS it's nice to have smaller tasks you set out to do that are personal to you everyday. For example: I never really used to make my bed but now I have been working towards making that a habit I do everyday, I also try to eat breakfast and make myself coffee. Doing these small tasks have helped me work towards completing bigger tasks I might need to complete later in the day. I also try not to be too hard on myself if I don't complete a task as well because stuff comes up all the time!
3. It's okay to say you have too much on your plate. If you're not at capacity to take on more work that's fine. (You do not even need to explain yourself)
4. Ask for extensions! (Time is social construct)