

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

**EXECUTIVE  
OFFICER'S  
SEMESTER  
REPORT**



**Jess Dela Cruz**  
**VP Events & Student Affairs**  
**May 2021 - Aug 2021**



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hello everyone,

I have now served one term (Summer Semester - May 2021 to August 2021) within the Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) as Vice-President Events & Student Affairs (VPESA). Thank you again for the support and trust to have elected me in this position. I have and continue to do this work on the Unceded and stolen territories of the x̱wməθḵwəy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), Seḻíḻwítulh (Tsleil-Waututh), ḵwíḵwəł̱əm (Kwikwetlem) and q̱íc̱əy̱ (Katzie) Nations. This position has continuously encouraged me to learn how and what standing in solidarity and allyship with our Indigenous community members looks like. Furthermore, it has pushed me to continuously challenge this colonial institution of Simon Fraser University (SFU) to do better in the inclusion of marginalized students within their decision making processes.



Since the beginning of my university experience, I always knew I wanted to run and hold one of these positions on the SFSS Executive Committee. I wanted to make a positive impact within our community and advocate for student needs. It's hard to believe that



the term went by so fast! Since Day 1, I have learned so much about this job, and what needs to be done, what projects are upcoming, how we intersect and challenge the university and its administration and at the same time, work together. And, what services and how student experience can be improved. It's been a challenge and difficult at times, but rewarding.



This position was greatly influenced by the labour of VP Student Life, Jennifer Chou (2020-2021). I cannot thank her enough for her guidance, support, and encouragement. And, to the SFU Progressives for being the core of organizing and their advocacy work within the past few years. It was their labour that has helped our student society go in this positive, student empowered direction. I look up to these folks as mentors and for their guidance. I cannot do this work without you.

It has been a unique experience to be running with the SFSS Executives and as the SFU Progressives. We spent months preparing for our roles and campaigned all in an online environment. We spent our first few months together working remotely and slowly transitioned to an in-person and hybrid model. Individually we have had our own successes and struggles within this role, but I am thankful to have continued support from each of them. And, how they continuously challenge me to do better.

Most importantly, I am so thankful for our wonderful and supportive Staff who has always been there to answer my questions, fill in the gaps, add the small but important



details that I may miss, and provide their experience and knowledge to support me, the Execs, Council, and our undergraduate students. It is so evident how hard they work and how they genuinely care for us. Seeing each of them in person for the first time after a few months of working remotely was so special.

The first semester really changed my work ethic. It also challenged how I balance being a student taking classes, the pandemic, the transition to in-person, my personal life, mental health, time management, and balance.

I also want to recognize that the majority of our board is comprised of Black, Indigenous and/or People of Colour. The work we do is not easy at times. It is emotionally and mentally draining when the discussions, motions, and advocacy work we do has direct impacts to ourselves, communities, our families, our relationships, and our friends that may make us sad or bring up hard parts of our lived experiences. Yet, we continue to push on and do the work. It has been heartwarming to feel and have solidarity amongst each other when it becomes difficult.

I worked on the back-end and front-end of various tasks, projects, and events. This position also taught me many administrative and managerial skills that I know will be so extremely helpful once this position ends.

This first term was filled with growing pains, but I look forward to the opportunities and challenges to come. Thank you once again for electing me into this position, and I hope I have been able to serve you well so far.

In solidarity,

Jess Dela Cruz (she/her)

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "jdelacruz". The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style with a prominent initial 'j'.

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# COMPLETED PROJECTS

May 2021

## Council Orientation Onboarding

May was the first month of our term. We spent the first few weeks having onboarding sessions as Council Members. I assisted our Council by taking quick notes and I try to do this every Council meeting and dev session when I have the capacity. During our onboarding, we learned the core components of our job that includes but are not limited to society governance, Robert's Rules of Order, Equity and anti-oppression training, and more.

## Carry-Over Events

- SFSS Wilderness Workshop
- Disability Awareness Workshop

During this month, I had the opportunity to carry-over two events that my predecessor, Jennifer Chou (VP Student Life 2020-2021) had: SFSS Wilderness Workshop and Disability Awareness Workshop. For the SFSS Wilderness Workshop, guests learned how to stay safe in the wild from learning what to pack, how to call for help, how to stay warm, and what to do when you are put in precarious situations. For the disability workshop, guests learned how to create spaces in the online and physical world in which disabled folks are included, heard, seen, and represented. And how as non-disabled folks can work as allies to uplift and support their voices and needs.



## Club Management

While these incidents remain confidential for the privacy and safety of the student, I worked with our President, VP Internal & Organizational Development, and members of our Society Staff and our Excluded Society-Staff to ensure these matters are dealt with appropriately.

## Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Memorial

Trigger Warning: This section discusses Residential Schools and unmarked graves.

So-called Canada was met with the news of the discovery of unmarked graves of 215 children whose lives were lost due to residential schools at Kamloops Indian Residential School in Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc. This greatly affected Indigenous community members and their families. I worked with VP External & Community Affairs to hold a memorial service and vigil in front of the SUB to remember and honour the children lost and families affected. Together, we created resources and I helped in minor ways with the statement. For the day of, I helped with the preparation, take-down, live-streaming and hosting the vigil. There was singing and drumming and we invited Indigenous community members and a small number of SFU administrators to join in person and live-streamed the event due to Covid-19. We were extremely disappointed that SFU did not act quick enough and had to count on the labour of Indigenous students to yet again call for action and support. We called on SFU to lower their flags at half-past and pushed President Joy Johnson to do more and to do better. The search for more unmarked graves across so-called Canada are continuing until today, and the number has increased. We must continue to always support and be there for our Indigenous communities.

See statement [here](#).





June 2021

## Communications Coordinator Hiring Committee

I served as one of the employer representatives for the Communications Coordinator Hiring Committee. The other employer representative was Ayesha Khan (Operations Organizer) and employee representatives: Nancy Mah (Member Services Coordinator) and Shelley Durante (then, Member Services Coordinator and now, Building Coordinator). This was my first time being on a hiring committee within the SFSS and I prepared by reading our hiring handbook and asking so many questions. We also took part in making sure the Job Description (JD) was inclusive, and we always stress in our JD's that we encourage folks from women, Black, Indigenous, and members of racialized communities, disabled folks, and members of LGBTQ+, cultural, religious, and linguistic communities. We had incredible candidates to interview and making the decision was extremely difficult. The SFSS is extremely lucky to have Ilham Benttahir as our Communications Coordinator, who continues to support us and our campaigns we do within this organization.



## Collaboration with SFU Rec

This was my first ever event and collaboration with SFU Recreation. We planned to make quick-bites recipes that could easily be done in the microwave (because hello - we are broke university students). We made easy breakfast, snack, and dessert recipes. SFU Recreation was a pleasure to work with, as they did the bulk of the planning. SFSS helped provide support in monetary ways with giveaway winners. The challenge was making sure that the pricing and gifts weren't too expensive, and that we had multiple winners win smaller prizes for participating in the contest. The other difficult challenge was wi-fi and Instagram Live. We had to restart the live three times, and ended up having to save it on @sfss\_events Instagram. However, I was pleasantly surprised with how many viewers we had and how many people participated in making the recipes and following the rules.

## We Were Here We Were Queer x SFSS Zine Launch & Poetry Open Mic

I reached out to We Were Here We Were Queer (WWHWWQ) as this month was Pride Month. Coincidentally, WWHWWQ was also doing their zine launch. It was a perfect time to collaborate. Together, we planned the logistics of the poetry, open mic, and zine launch event held on Zoom. It was such a beautiful event, with the labour and voices done by queer folks on campus. There was song, poetry, and speeches of what their art meant to them. Queer folks and allies joined in and listened, supported and celebrated an important day and month!

WWHWWQ Instagram [Link](#)

WWHWWQ Website [Link](#)



SFU WE WERE HERE WE WERE QUEER X SFSS

# ZINE LAUNCH AND POETRY OPEN MIC

Friday, June 25th  
6-7:30 PM | @ ZOOM

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



## #CancelCanadaDay Campaign

Especially since the continuous discoveries of the unmarked graves, I was reflecting on what this day meant and its history. For the council meeting right before July 1 (Canada Day), I presented the following motion (view [here](#)):

Whereas Simon Fraser University (SFU) and Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) are currently situated on the Unceded Traditional Territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), Sel̓íl witulh (Tsleil-Waututh), kʷikwəλ̓'əm (Kwikwetlem) and q'ícə'y' (Katzie) Nations and we formally acknowledge that these nations have been here since time immemorial,

Whereas Canada Day dismisses the history of colonialism, genocide, and forced assimilation that has and continues to, harm Indigenous People(s) living on Turtle Island since time immemorial,

Whereas the colonial states' anthem known as the "Canadian National Anthem," is a colonial patriotic song that may be triggering for Indigenous Community Members and does not honour Indigenous People(s) and their sovereignty, language, ceremony, culture, and Indigenous Ways of Knowing,

Whereas Canada Day covers up the racist, inequitable, and discriminatory laws and regulations that make it difficult for Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour, immigrants, non-English speakers, and other equity-seeking groups to have equitable treatment and supports within this country,"

Whereas celebrating Canada Day means to celebrate the genocide, systemic racism, trauma, lack of mental health and monetary support, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit folks—all that our so-called Canadian government so chooses to ignore nor provide any sustainable assistance and fair reparations,

Whereas the Idle No More #CancelCanadaDay campaign was initiated by the labour and activism of Indigenous People(s) who are committed "to honour to honour all of the lives lost to the Canadian state – Indigenous lives, Black lives, Migrant lives, Women and Trans and 2Spirit lives – all of the relatives that we have lost,"

Be it resolved that the SFSS Council support, amplify, and participate in the ongoing #CancelCanadaDay campaign by Idle No More, this year and for the foreseeable future,

Be it further resolved that SFSS Council disregard any form of celebration or idealization of so-called Canada at SFU,

Be it further resolved that SFSS Council instead use "Canada Day" to reflect on, remember, honour and support Indigenous Peoples who have been affected by colonization, genocide and forced assimilation. In particular in relation to the residential school system and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit People(s),

Be it further resolved that SFSS Council help promote education of the colonial, oppressive and racialized history of so-called Canada through support, amplification and participation in decolonial and anti-oppressive narratives. Highlighting Indigenous knowledge systems, while discrediting settler-colonial narratives,"

Be it further resolved that the SFSS #CancelCanadaDay campaign where participating SFSS Membership and Indigenous Community Members submit a photo of themselves wearing an orange T-Shirt attached with a short statement as to why they are not



participating in “Canada Day” be released in relevant SFSS social media platforms anytime between the dates of June 30 and July 2,

Be it further resolved that the SFSS Council hold the current SFU President, Joy Johnson, and future SFU Presidents accountable to ensure that all “SFU’s flags will stay lowered indefinitely to honour the lives and mourn the loss of these discoveries” and that we must oversee that these flags on the Surrey, Burnaby, and Vancouver campuses will never fly at full mast again;

Be it further resolved that there will be a campaign struck and led by VP Events & Student Affairs, Jess Dela Cruz with support from the VP Equity and Sustainability alongside the Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour Committee (BIPOC) and Executive Committee, that ensures that the Canadian national anthem will no longer be played or be sung by any staff, student, faculty member, alumni, or guest at all and any SFU events, ceremonies (included but not limited to: remote and in-person convocation ceremonies); nor through any form of recorded audio or video via speaker; and, at any home sporting games where SFU Athletics play; and that we encourage Host Nation members and Indigenous elders to come open up SFU events and ceremonies,

Be it further resolved that the push towards SFU to replace the current flags with Host Nations’ Flags fall under the same campaign as mentioned above

--- End of Motion ---

There is still a lot of work to be done to continue and put pressure to make sure these action items are completed. I understand that there are barriers that may only allow for parts of the “be it (further) resolved” clauses to occur, however those are at least small steps in the right direction to apply pressure to the university to ensure that they are really following in their commitments to reconciliation. I look forward to striking the first meeting and receiving support from the Executive and the relevant committees to do this work. I also helped write and compile resources for the #CancelCanadaDay Statement. View [here](#).

## July 2021

### Women’s Centre Assistant Hiring Committee

I served as one of the employer representatives, alongside VP Equity & Sustainability, Marie Haddad, for the Women’s Centre Assistant Hiring Committee. Our employee representatives were Athena Guertin (Women’s Centre Coordinator) and Somayeh Naseri (Administrative Coordinator). We interviewed five candidates and successfully hired one. The questions we had were specifically tailored to the women’s centre mandate, administrative work, SFSS knowledge, campaigns, and how they would act in solidarity with marginalized communities on campus.

## In-Person Event Guidelines

The previous board before me voted to suspend all in-person events for Clubs, Student Unions, and Constituency Groups near the start of the pandemic. Student groups have been hosting events, socials, and more through the online platform and remotely ever since. Come my term, there were so many changes happening with the British Columbia Provincial Health Order (PHO). The PHO constantly changed their guidelines of the amount of people allowed, and in what spaces, how masks were implemented, etc. Most recently (September), the implementation of vaccine-status checking was made mandatory for certain spaces, events, etc.

My role as VP Events has been largely based on what the BCPHO has been suggesting over the past few months. Things have been and continue to change and we have to be prepared to go along with it and make the necessary changes to our guidelines and processes of how we run events. I largely thank our staff for helping me in this process, and members of the Executive Committee with their consultation. Often, I have had collaboration and brainstorming sessions with Student Engagement & Retention (SER) and Meetings, Events, & Services (MECS) to check-in with each other about the changes they made with their events, how they are ensuring how to be COVID-19 safe, etc.

It was then during my term that I was sWe then created an initial set of In-Person Event Guidelines for Clubs, Student Unions, and Constituency Groups to follow. In my opinion, we were more careful about the max number of people, more helpful in providing masks and hand sanitizer to students, etc. than most.

### Version 1.0: In-Person Event Guidelines prior August 23

August 23rd was the date the SUB was planned to be open. In summary, these guidelines prior to the open required students to fill out this form and contact-19 tracing list for approval. We allowed students to continue to use spaces external to the SUB only. And, provided masks and hand sanitizer for pick up.

View [here](#).

### Version 2.0: In-Person Event Guidelines after August 23

While the SUB was open, we have yet to have full capacity of building management and staff working within the building. It was encouraged to use venues and spaces still external to the SUB, and perhaps look at SFU spaces and their bookings. And, we have entered the beginnings of the fourth wave of COVID-19. We continued to be cautious and thoughtful and continued to extend the same guidelines that were prior to August 23rd, onwards and until further notice.

View [here](#).

## Version 3.0: In-Person Event Guidelines & Application October 8th, onwards

At this time, we have hired more building staff and have Staff working in the SUB. It has been such a crazy few months of the start of the semester, as we have seen the SUB be used to its advantage. The space at all hours of the day is constantly being used by our students to study and to connect with others. We have seen folks hunker down for hours at a time and see folks always entering and exiting the space. We have not yet opened up any room bookings as we have been training our staff in its use, making edits and revisions to how we approach this, and working with an external company to make sure we have the appropriate changes made to make sure the self-serve system is good. Therefore, we have not yet allowed any students to host any events within the SUB.

The changes that we made to the In-Person Event Guidelines & Application effective October 8th, were quite significant. The PHO has implemented proof of vaccination for indoor events, in certain cases. And continued to have other guidelines from the previous month's continuation.

For On-Campus Events, we still maxed the capacity to be 25 and have these be hosted external to the SUB.

For Off-Campus Events, the attendance may have more than 25 people, in which the PHO and COVID Health & Safety Guidelines must be followed. As always and in every application and guideline, events at private residences are not allowed.

The completion of the COVID-19 Contact Tracing is still required.

View [here](#).

## August

### Emergency Response Plan

The

### SUB Soft Opening Week

Yay! After all these years, we finally made it. The Student Union Building (SUB) is finally going to open!

This event was planned in less than a month. I took a Leave of Absence of the first week of















## Miscellaneous

- Appointment of Associate Vice-President Events & Student Affairs
- Compiled List of Motions and Discussion Items
- Collaboration

# ON-GOING PROJECTS

## Committees:

- Events & Student Affairs Committee
- Member Services Advisory Committee

Menstrual Products Initiative

Understanding Land Acknowledgements Event

Issues Policies

#CancelCanadaDay Campaign

Room Booking Policies

# PAIN POINTS



Social Media  
Balancing School  
Hiring Committees  
Burn-Out  
COVID-19 and Return to Campus  
Sometimes...it's okay to cancel

# First @sfss\_sfu Executive Committee meeting of the 2021/22 term!!







Mental Health

# RECOMMENDATIONS



Time Block  
Emails  
Work Reports  
Community

