

Aboriginal Role Models Show Peers How to Take Their Futures Further at Ontario Universities

Toronto | February 2, 2016

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Aboriginal learners who have followed their passion and found their voice at Ontario universities are spreading the word to their peers in a series of testimonials about the transformative power of a university education in hopes of inspiring other Aboriginal youth to see the benefit of higher education.

The 'Let's Take Our Future Further' campaign launched today by the [Council of Ontario Universities](#) (COU) on behalf of the province's 20 publicly funded universities aims to celebrate the achievements and contributions of Aboriginal learners and alumni at Ontario universities and to encourage current students to continue to pursue and complete their studies.

"There are more than 6,500 Aboriginal learners at Ontario universities and thousands of Aboriginal alumni who are contributing to Ontario's social, cultural, and economic well-being," says Jonathan

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Hamilton-Diabo, Director of Aboriginal Student Services at the University of Toronto, and Chair of the COU working group responsible for the initiative.

“We want Ontarians to celebrate that success and, now, Aboriginal learners who have blazed their own trail at university are encouraging others to do the same.”

As part of the Let’s Take Our Future Further campaign, COU has launched the website www.futurefurther.ca, featuring compelling profiles and videos from 13 role models who are studying or have recently graduated from an Ontario university.

One role model - [Raigelee Alorut](#) - tells how she overcame the challenges of attending university as a mature student and grandmother and how she hopes that her Honours Bachelor of Arts will serve as an inspiration to her grandchildren. Another role model - [Donna May Kimmaliardjuk](#) - describes the welcoming home she found at her university’s Aboriginal Student Centre and the personal growth she experienced while studying to become the first female Inuit cardiac surgeon.

View Raigelee’s Story:

View Donna's Story:

Resource kits for Aboriginal learners transitioning into or considering attending an Ontario university are also on the new site, and will be distributed widely.

Next week, an online video contest will launch on Twitter and Facebook asking Aboriginal learners currently enrolled in university to tell their story about how university education has taken their future further, and also enriched the future of their communities.

The COU campaign follows a report by the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission, which put a spotlight on the need to ensure equitable access to postsecondary education for Aboriginal students.

November also marks the 20th anniversary of the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which highlighted the many benefits of education and the huge costs to individuals and communities if these opportunities are missed.

“The work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, underscore the important role that education plays in building and sustaining communities and realizing true reconciliation in the future for our collective past,” says Reza Moridi, Ontario’s Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

“The launch of Let’s Take Our Future Further builds on that momentum and the Government of Ontario is proud to have been able to fund this effort.”

According to Statistics Canada, seven per cent of Canada’s self-identified Aboriginal population over 15 had a university degree or certificate compared with 21 per cent of Canada’s non-Aboriginal population.

In Ontario, nine per cent of Ontario’s self-identified Aboriginal population in that age group had a university degree or certificate compared to 23 per cent of Ontario’s non-Aboriginal population.

The same Statistics Canada survey indicates that Aboriginal youth between 15 and 24 represent 18 per cent of the total Aboriginal population in Canada, with a further 28 per cent being children aged

14 and under. This means that a significant number of Aboriginal youth will be contributing to Canada's economic and social prosperity by 2026.

“Ontario universities believe deeply that Ontario is a stronger province and is made up of stronger communities as a result of the achievements and contributions of Aboriginal peoples,” says Hamilton-Diabo.

To view all 13 videos and profiles and get more information on Aboriginal learning, visit www.futurefurther.ca

Follow us on [Twitter at @futurefurther](#); [YouTube at Future Further](#), [Instagram at @Future.Further](#) and [Facebook at FutureFurther](#).

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COU is the voice of Ontario's universities, promoting the value of education, research and innovation that leads to social, cultural and economic success.

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[Aboriginal grads join push to help peers embrace higher learning](#)

February 2, 2016

Raigelee Alorut, an Inuit grandmother, is among the aboriginal university grads joining a campaign urging indigenous people to get a higher education.

[Read more ›](#)

[Universities ask for sexual violence bill to apply to staff as well as students](#)

January 25, 2016

Organizations representing Ontario universities and colleges largely support a government bill that would require each school to implement and frequently review a sexual violence policy, but they're also asking for a few small changes.

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[Heard: 404,700 applications filed for Ontario universities for this fall](#)

January 18, 2016

High school students sent nearly 405,000 applications to Ontario universities for this fall's school year. Almost 88,000 secondary school students filed more than 404,700 applications for spots at Ontario's 20 publicly funded universities for the 2016 academic year - down just 0.1 per cent from the previous year's levels.

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RT [@d_may89](#): Oh hey, that's me! Honoured to have been chosen to participate in this campaign and share my story

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