

2021-2022

Yellowhead Institute Annual Report



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A Message from our Executive Director

Every year, for the past few years, I have been planting, growing, harvesting and sharing semaa (tobacco). I got the seeds from a student way back. I could never actually get them to grow, but around the time we launched Yellowhead Institute, I gifted some to a colleague (Minowaywayjiwan Sinclair), and, she figured it out. She gave me a plant from those seeds, and I went on to propagate dozens, maybe even hundreds of plants since then. I share seeds and seedlings with friends and cousins, and they do the same. In this way, we've all helped reestablish an abundance of ceremonial tobacco in the region, where it was once difficult to find.

As we began drafting this, our fourth annual report, this image kept coming back to me as an analogue for our work at Yellowhead.

Our 2021-2022 year was somewhat exceptional for us because we took a sort of break. We did not stop working, of course, but we slowed our research production, considered our success of the past years and started to imagine a transition to a new type of organization. Put another way: we began to plant seeds for a future Yellowhead Institute. This started with expanding our team, revising our objectives, and exploring the possibilities of new growth, primarily into education and art, culture, and heritage.

Tending to these new ideas with water and sun and song, we held workshops and planning meetings to launch pilot projects and initiatives that have been, above all else, about establishing relationships and figuring out how these new things fit. While in progress, work on the Return our Ancestors Red Paper and Land Back Curriculum look good so far!



PHOTO BY HAYDEN KING

Tending, in turn, has led to the best part of growing: harvesting and sharing. We are so often overwhelmed with The Work at Yellowhead. There is always another crisis or battle. We get through it by supporting each other and building networks to expand the scaffolding of support. Sometimes it works; sometimes, it doesn't. But we did our best this year, collaborating with new and old friends on the Indigenous Feminisms Symposium and the Six Nations Freedom School; at each, sharing what we can.

Collaboration has largely been internal to our community. But we've done another type of sharing outside it: challenging Canadians and their approach to our collective relationship. Yellowhead people continue to be a force in the media, helping shape the public dialogue and narratives on Indigenous issues. This past year, I am particularly proud of our work around truth and reconciliation. We have been generous.

Fall, is the time of drying and "canning" semaa. It's the time before we actually use this powerful technology. And, again, reflecting on our recent work, I feel like that's where Yellowhead Institute is at: a moment of preparation.

Hayden King

Executive Director, Yellowhead Institute



Conceptualizing The Yellowhead School: A Different Kind of Education

How might Yellowhead Institute radically transform prevailing beliefs about knowledge, education, and learning while expanding on our objective to support movements toward the restoration of Indigenous sovereignty?



PHOTO BY STAN WILLIAMS (MOHAWK & ANISHINAABE)

Back in 2020, the Yellowhead team began thinking more deeply about expanding our education-focused work. Since launching the Institute, we have established relationships and collaborated extensively with communities. In doing so, we have consistently heard about the need to Indigenize spaces of education.

We often hear from educators who use our research and resources as teaching tools; we have existing initiatives such as the Freedom School, which brings together young Indigenous leaders for programming that centres learning, skill building and relationship-building; and we are in the process of developing an

online curriculum based on the *Land Back* Red Paper. Over the year, the team imagined what it could look like to build on this work and intentionally develop a new wing of the Institute, bringing together and expanding on Yellowhead's educational initiatives.

Rooted in ancestral beliefs about the transformative power of knowledge and education, the Yellowhead School will build on existing initiatives like the Freedom School as well as create new in-person and online curricula and programming developed by, and for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit rural, urban, and virtual communities.

In 2021, we began building a relationship with the Atkinson Foundation, which is providing tremendous support in helping us realize our vision for the Yellowhead School. The Faculty of Arts at Toronto Metropolitan University is supporting a long-sought home for Yellowhead Institute, and we look forward to officially launching our new space and school in 2023.

Until then, we'll continue developing and refining our vision for the school, which will include collaborating with a diversity of perspectives within the Indigenous community for guidance and feedback.



YELLOWHEAD OBJECTIVE #1

Supporting movements toward the restoration of Indigenous sovereignty.



TAYA JARDINE, YELLOWHEAD RESEARCH ASSISTANT EXAMINES AN INTRICATE PIECE OF BEADWORK ON THE BACK OF A VEST HOUSED AT THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM ARCHIVES; PHOTO BY JESSIE LOYER

In 2022, Yellowhead Institute began the process of developing our third Red Paper, *Return Our Ancestors*. Led by Dr. Jas Morgan, Yellowhead Associate, *Return Our Ancestors* seeks to address the ongoing human rights violations of Canadian collections and museums and their continued holding of Indigenous remains. The project addresses the issue of stolen remains and attempts to build kinship between collections and Indigenous communities to better care for the Indigenous objects that remain in museum and gallery holdings. It proposes that projects of repatriation can be reciprocal, Indigenous-led, and focused on building relationships between Indigenous communities and individuals who care for Indigenous objects.

Return Our Ancestors: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper

How might Indigenous kinship and customary care inform Indigenous relationships to cultural objects and remains in collections and on display in museums?

This Red Paper builds on the Yellowhead Special Report authored by Dr. Morgan, *A Culture of Exploitation: "Reconciliation" and the Institutions of Canadian Art*.

In June 2022, the Return Our Ancestors team welcomed Indigenous community leaders for a two-day gathering on repatriation, museum collections and archives, and customary care. Following Yellowhead's community-centred research model, the outcomes from this gathering will help shape the research direction and elements, which are divided into three key sections: 1) Bodies Back: Repatriation of Human Remains; 2) Caring for Our Ancestors: Repatriation Beyond Human Remains; 3) Caring for Our Descendants: Customary Care and Indigenous Archives.



YELLOWHEAD OBJECTIVE #6

Reclaiming Indigenous governance of culture and heritage.



Land Back Online Curriculum

In 2019, Yellowhead Institute published our first Red Paper, *Land Back*, about how First Nation lands have been stolen and how they're getting it back. Since its release, the report has been downloaded tens of thousands of times and engagement with the report remains steady. We have been working on further mobilizing the *Land Back* report by creating an online learning resource based on the report.

Over this last year, we have been conceptualizing and developing this curriculum, centring a simple, compelling, community-focused approach that takes into consideration different levels of understanding of

the report content and diverse learning styles. The key themes and concepts from *Land Back* will be further contextualized and explained with featured guest speakers, curated resources, and select activities in a series of self-directed learning modules. We also convened an advisory group comprised of members of our network; they are providing valuable guidance and input on the curriculum.

This project will be released as part of the digital offerings of the Yellowhead School in 2023.

Return to Gale Creek



STILL FROM RETURN TO GALE CREEK; RUSSELL & LATOYA WINDSOR

“After the oil spill, we never really came back here... I felt numb. I felt angry. I wanted those guys [Kirby Oil Executives] to know how it felt to lose something so close to your heart...Their sorries will never heal our land, but I’m going to heal from the hurt that they gave us.”

- LATOYA WINDSOR

Part Four of the *Land Back* Red Paper, Reclamation, featured twelve case studies, including the case of the Nathan E. Stewart spill and the Heiltsuk community's response, which ultimately created an infrastructure for future environmental and marine care through the Horizon Maritime partnership. As part of our knowledge mobilization strategy for *Land Back*, Yellowhead had plans for a short film on these reclamation efforts that were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

longtime Heiltsuk collaborator, Damien Gillis. We connected with father and daughter Russell and Latoya Windsor, who have a special connection to Gale Creek, an area severely impacted by the spill. Russell, who was a first responder at the site of the spill, and Latoya spent a day filming and recounting some of their memories of Gale Creek, the day of the incident, and the lasting impact it has had on themselves personally, and the Heiltsuk community.

However, in 2021, we were finally able to proceed with this project in collaboration with filmmaker and

We look forward to releasing the film in collaboration with the Heiltsuk in 2022-2023.



2021-2022

SHARING IDEAS, MAKING CONNECTIONS

Indigenous Feminisms Symposium

In April 2022, Yellowhead Institute partnered with the University of Victoria, Centre for Indigenous Research and Community-Led Engagement to host a day of roundtables as part of the Indigenous Feminisms Symposium.

Inspired by the influential text, *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, originally edited by Joyce Green and now entering its third edition to be edited by Gina Starblanket, the Indigenous Feminisms Symposium was held to inspire generative discussions that will build into its new iteration. The two roundtables featured new and longtime Yellowhead collaborators:

1. **Queer, Trans, 2S Perspectives on the Indian Act**
Emily Riddle, Brandi Bird, Darcie Bernhardt, Adrienne Huard, Daniel Cardinal McCartney, and Dr. Jas Morgan
2. **Relational Desires: Black, Indigenous, and Black-Indigenous Co-Conspiring**
Joy Henderson, Dr. Rai Reece, and Dr. Megan Scribe

These roundtables, led by Yellowhead Associates, Dr. Jas Morgan and Dr. Megan Scribe, reflect two of Yellowhead's new objectives, established in 2022:



YELLOWHEAD OBJECTIVE #5

Building relationships with Black and racialized communities towards decolonial futures.



YELLOWHEAD OBJECTIVE #7

(Re)-centring feminist, queer, trans, and 2-spirit leadership in Indigenous politics and policy.

"A lot of people don't even know the long history of Black and Indigenous collaboration, and Afro-Indigeneity... It's a new topic. What happens if we collaborate? People get really scared, and that's a good thing in my books."

- JOY HENDERSON, ON RELATIONAL DESIRES



DR. RAI REECE, JOY HENDERSON, & DR. MEGAN SCRIBE; PHOTO BY YUMI NUMATA

In addition to hosting a day of roundtables, members of the Yellowhead team also participated in panel presentations at the symposium:

Cloudback: Grounding Indigenous Digital Humanities

Dr. Megan Scribe, Yellowhead Associate
& Dr. Jas Morgan, Yellowhead Associate

A Treaty Feminist Ethic of Complaint and Worldbuilding: The White Paper to Now
Emily Riddle, Yellowhead Board Member

On Radical Reclamation of Anishinaabe Care Ethics
Dr. Eva Jewell, Yellowhead Research Director



2021-2022

— SHARING IDEAS, MAKING CONNECTIONS



RIBBON ROAD INSTALLATION BY EMILY RIDDLE; PHOTO BY YUMI NUMATA

Dr. Jas Morgan also curated an exhibition at the symposium, *Protect the Sacred*, honouring the work of Christi Belcourt. Belcourt's paintings graced the cover of Dr. Green's collection, *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*. This exhibition marked how far Indigenous feminisms have come, and celebrated the future of queer and trans Indigenous feminists who will continue to live their feminist lives. Protect the

Sacred honoured an intergenerational conversation between Indigenous feminists in art, including work from legacy, as well emerging Indigenous feminist artists, including Francis Dick, Lou-ann Neel, Jordanna George, Daphne Odjig, Margaret August, Emily Riddle, Dan Cardinal McCartney, and Darcie Bernhardt.



BRANDI BIRD, EMILY RIDDLE AND DARCI BERNHARDT; PHOTO BY YUMI NUMATA

"With the *Indian Act*, we do hold on to a lot of self-hatred ... especially because we've basically been told to hate ourselves ... We are, or we have, our own self-determination; our bodies are timeless; they are ours. And we can express that on our own accord, especially when we're often hyper-sexualized and also shamed in the same way."

— ADRIENNE HUARD, QUEER, TRANS, 2S PERSPECTIVES ON THE *INDIAN ACT*



2021-2022

SHARING IDEAS, MAKING CONNECTIONS

Six Nations of the Grand River Freedom School

In July 2021, Yellowhead hosted a three-day Freedom School for eight young leaders from Six Nations of the Grand River engaged in advocacy/policy on behalf of their communities, shaping dialogue and influencing decisions related to land and water jurisdiction. This Freedom School focused specifically on land defense work at 1492 Land Back Lane and the Protect the Tract campaign. Participants engaged in discussions on the moratorium, traditional leadership, injunctions and tools for organizing.

Select programming elements co-created and planned with youth participants included:

The Great Law and Confederacy Structure
Cleveland Thomas, Onondaga Beaver Chief,
Haudenosaunee Confederacy

Moratorium & Protect the Tract Discussion
Courtney Skye, Mohawk, Turtle Clan,
Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and Todd
Williams, Cayuga, Snipe Clan, Six Nations of the
Grand River Territory

LGBTQ2S Organizing
Riley Yesno, Anishinaabe, Eabametoong First Nation

Fundraising and Settler Philanthropy
Kris Archie (Secwepemc woman and Seme7 settler)



FREEDOM SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS TALK WITH KRIS ARCHIE, CEO OF THE CIRCLE ON PHILANTHROPY;
PHOTO BY YUMI NUMATA



YELLOWHEAD OBJECTIVE #2

Training, mentoring and learning from the next generation of Indigenous leaders.

“ As a research fellow, I'm incredibly thankful to be able to return home and bring the strengths of Yellowhead Institute with me. Haudenosaunee youth at Grand River grow up in a historically and politically complex community. I deeply believe that putting strategies, resources, and policy tools in the hands of young Haudenosaunee is a critical step to ensuring that all future generations of Haudenosaunee children grow up in a safe community, one that will have overcome the systematic dispossession the generations before us endured.”

- COURTNEY SKYE, LEAD 2021 FREEDOM SCHOOL ORGANIZER, YELLOWHEAD INSTITUTE RESEARCH FELLOW

Testimonials & Feedback

We wanted to better understand how our broader community uses the research and resources we put out into the world, so in May 2021, we sent out an online survey to our broader community. The feedback we received helped us understand how people engage with our content, what we could do more of, and how we can keep improving and evolving in our commitment to creating valuable tools and resources for our growing community.

“I consider Yellowhead to be one of the most important resources available for those wanting to support Indigenous self-determination beyond the 'colonial politics of recognition'. Every paper has taught me something, deepening my engagement with the subjects, and informing my approach to policy and research.”

“I have learned a lot myself, particularly from *Land Back* about Indigenous jurisdiction and possible futures. Your work helps me understand our current context but also helps me imagine how things could be different and better.”

“I'm a part of a co-op of music journalists and we reviewed the first section of *"Cash Back"* in a reading group. Though it doesn't deal specifically with music, we felt it was important for fellow music journalists to understand settler colonialism through an economic lens, and the reading allowed us to extrapolate and discuss the ways colonialism manifests in the music industry.”

“My workplace has been using the reports to read one section weekly as a group to stay up to date on the progress (mostly lack thereof) on reconciliation and learn more about what we can do as an organization to move reconciliation forward. We are a small non-profit and have learned a lot about various topics related to reconciliation; we use the readings as a jumping off point to do more research if we don't know about a topic or an event mentioned in the report. It helps us stay accountable to each other to keep learning and apply principles of reconciliation to our work.”

“I work with Indigenous Services Canada and didn't want to totally rely on government training, which I have often found wanting. [I use Yellowhead resources for] personal development, and to be able to be conversant on these issues on my own social media and when discussing with friends and family if need be. I take this info into the voting booth with me, too.”



2021-2022

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY

X University Name Change

In May 2021, Yellowhead Institute published *Introducing X University: An Open Letter to the Community*, and from June 2021 - June 2022, it was our most-read brief with over **42,300** pageviews.

The campaign called on students, faculty, administration and the community generally, to “remove the university’s current name from our email signatures, CVs, and other professional communications and replace it with an X,” as the resistance to X University’s name (formerly Ryerson University), began to re-emerge. The X represented a signature under duress (a reference to some early treaty signatures), a blank space waiting to be filled, or a general symbol of resistance.

In the months that followed, the campaign was taken up with thousands of supporters and helped push the university to announce a name change process.

On August 26, 2021, it was announced that the X University board of governors accepted all 22 of the recommendations of the Standing Strong (Mash Koh Wee Kah Pooh Win) Task Force, including the recommendation to rename the university. And on April 26, 2022, it was announced the university would be renamed Toronto Metropolitan University.

Yellowhead Institute recognizes and raises up the Indigenous and Black students and faculty who made this decision inevitable.



YELLOWHEAD OBJECTIVE #4

Holding governments and institutions accountable for decisions that impact Indigenous peoples.



JULY 1, 2021 RALLY ORGANIZED BY WRECKONCILIATION X STUDENT GROUP; PHOTO BY YUMI NUMATA

Yellowhead in the Media

Yellowhead Institute team members and research have been featured or cited in the media over 200 times between 2021-2022. Truth and Reconciliation is one of the most requested media topics. Here are some select press pieces featuring the expertise of our team:

- **Is toppling Ryerson statue a step towards Truth and Reconciliation?** CBC Listen: Ontario Today, feat. Dr. Eva Jewell
- **Reconciliation can't be achieved with only symbolic gestures,** Globe and Mail Op-Ed, Dr. Eva Jewell and Ian Mosby
- **The reckoning and push for 'X University' at a Toronto school,** This Matters Podcast, Dr. Hayden King
- **6 years after TRC report, Canada is failing to 'rectify ongoing harms' against Indigenous communities new report charges,** Toronto Star feature, Manuela Vega



Calls to Action Accountability: A 2021 Status Update on Reconciliation

Why did it take the profoundly disturbing revelations of thousands of unmarked graves being found on the grounds of residential schools across the country to see Canada begin to make reconciliation a priority?

And what does it mean that the Calls to Action that Canada did complete were also arguably the easiest, most of the symbolic gestures we allude to as “low hanging fruit” in this year’s report?



YELLOWHEAD OBJECTIVE #4

Holding governments and institutions accountable for decisions that impact Indigenous peoples.



THUNDERBIRD NEST BY BLAKE ANGEONEB, ANISHINAABE, LAC SEUL FIRST NATION

On December 15, 2021, Yellowhead Institute released our third annual Calls to Action Accountability analysis. Co-led and authored by Dr. Eva Jewell (Yellowhead Research Director) and Dr. Ian Mosby, the research features interviews with a number of Indigenous leaders with deep expertise and knowledge in specific areas related to the Calls. These individuals include Dr. Cindy Blackstock, Dr. Kisha Supernant, and Kris Statnyk. This year’s report also included an artist collaboration with Blake Angecone, whose piece *Thunderbird Nest* is the feature artwork accompanying the report.

This year’s report was framed by the recent revelations of thousands of children’s graves discovered on the grounds of several Residential Schools and by signs of a new resolve among

Canadians to work toward reconciliation. As such, three new Calls to Action were completed, bringing the total to just 11 of the 94. Despite this, the report findings ultimately reveal an ongoing failure by the federal government to meaningfully enact the Calls to Action that would alter the disparate realities that Indigenous peoples experience in this country. With each passing year, Canada opts to perform reconciliation in an effort to shape a benevolent reputation rather than enact the substantial and structural changes that would rectify ongoing harms and change the course of our collective relationship.

The Calls to Action updates are some of our most viewed and downloaded resources. This year, there were over 42,000 pageviews and almost 4000 downloads of the 2021 status update.

“To the question, ‘When will it be enough?’ we say: it will be enough when the systems of oppression no longer exist. We will arrive at reconciliation when Indigenous peoples in this country experience, at the bare minimum, a living standard that reflects their visions of healthy and prosperous communities.”

- DR. EVA JEWELL & DR. IAN MOSBY

Who We Are

BOARD MEMBERS

Emily Riddle
nehiyaw iskwew, Treaty Six,
Alexander First Nation (Kipohtakaw)

Janice Makokis
nehiyaw iskwew, Treaty Six,
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Judith Sayers
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Kris Statnyk
Gwich'in, Vuntut Gwitchin
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Ininiw iskwew,
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& London, UK

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Dene and Ts'msyen citizen

Adrienne Huard
Anishinaabe,
Couchiching First Nation

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Mi'kmaw, Natoaganeg First Nation

Matthew Lal

Jessie Loyer
Cree-Métis

Ian Mosby

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Kitchenuhmaykoosib
Inninuug (KI) First Nation

Ellen Gabriel
Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk), Kanehsatà:ke

Christina Gray
Ts'msyen member of Lax Kw'alaams,
Dene, and Métis from Lutsel Ke

Shady Hafez
Algonquin Anishinaabe & Syrian,
Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg

Robert Houle
Wapewesipi (Swan River)
First Nation, Treaty 8

Shalene Jobin
Cree and Métis, Red Pheasant Cree
Nation, Treaty Six

Tanya Kappo
Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation

**Minnawaanigogizhigok
a.k.a Dawnis Kennedy**
Waabizheshi Marten Clan,
Anishinaabe Nation & descendant
of Canadian settlers

Andrea Landry
Anishinaabe
Pays Plat First Nation

Elisa Levi
Chippewas of Nawash
First Nation

Dëneze Nakehk'ó
Dene, Liidlii Kue First Nation

Sherry Pictou
Mi'kmaw, L'sitkuk,
Bear River First Nation

Brock Pitawanakwat
Anishinaabe,
Whitefish River First Nation

Raven Sinclair
Nehiyaw (Cree), George Gordon
First Nation, Treaty 4 Territory

Courtney Skye
Mohawk, Turtle Clan
Six Nations of the Grand
River Territory

Fallon Simard
Anishinaabe-Métis

Dr. Gina Starblanket
Cree/Saulteaux, Star Blanket Cree
Nation, Treaty 4 Territory

Karihwakeron Tim Thompson
Mohawk Nation, Bear Clan Family,
Wahta, Mohawk Territory

Vanessa Watts
Anishinaabe and Mohawk

Tara Williamson
Opaskwayak Cree Nation,
Gaabishkigamaag

Riley Yesno
Anishinaabe
Eabametoong First Nation

Acknowledgments

For their contributions to the establishment of Yellowhead Institute, we want to offer tremendous gratitude to Judith Sayers and John Cutfeet. Judith was a founding board member, and John was one of our first research fellows. Both contributed more than their titles imply, and their expertise and care helped shape our organization. Last year, Shiri Pasternak, a Yellowhead co-founder and the inaugural Research Director, stepped down from that role. Shiri took a further step away from Yellowhead in June, leaving the organization to pursue other projects. As we said then, Shiri's contributions to Yellowhead will be with us for a long time yet.

The Dean of Arts, Pamela Sugiman, continues to make space for Yellowhead within the university, and we offer thanks for her solidarity. Thanks also to Tanya Rumble, our Director of Development, for continuing to find Yellowhead supporters with values that match our own.

Speaking of which, our partnerships with the Laidlaw and Inspirit Foundations endure and even expand; we are proud to be in their communities. We look forward to building similar relationships with the Atkinson Foundation. We also want to recognize the Catherine Donnelly Foundation. And finally, thank you to all the individuals who contribute to Yellowhead. We know there are many organizations to give to, and the fact that we are chosen means a great deal to us. We hope we're able to honour that support.





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