

MEMORANDUM

To: The Dalhousie University community

From: Wanda M. Costen, PhD, Provost and Vice-President Academic

Date: Thursday, April 10, 2025

Re: Appointment of John R. Sylliboy as Vice-Provost, Indigenous Relations

Dalhousie is committed to deep and meaningful partnerships and relationships with Indigenous peoples across Canada. In this spirit of reconciliation and in keeping with the goals and initiatives identified in Dalhousie's Indigenous Strategy, we are pleased to announce the appointment of John R. Sylliboy as inaugural Vice-Provost, Indigenous Relations starting May 20, 2025.

John is L'nu from the Millbrook Mi'kmaw Community in Nova Scotia. John's primary focus has been to advocate and build support for Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQIA+ individuals and communities in the Atlantic region and nationally. He is the co-founder and Executive Director of the Wabanaki Two-Spirit Alliance, advocating for the Two-Spirit community, human rights, and cultural awareness.

John is a PhD candidate at McGill University, exploring gender, sexuality, and sex by integrating L'nuwey (Mi'kmaw) perspectives through Etuaptmunk or Two-Eyed Seeing. He has published research about Indigenous health through his role as scientific director with IWK Health and the Chronic Pain Network. John also collaborates on numerous research projects, publications, and knowledge-sharing opportunities about the L'nu worldview in health, education, and policy development.

John wanted to share the following with our Dal community:

I'm thrilled to be part of the inaugural role as the VPIR, advancing initiatives for L'nu'k and Indigenous students, faculty, and staff on the Dalhousie campus. The office of the VPIR aims to enhance pathways between learning and opportunities through meaningful and culturally-led approaches that will create opportunities for Indigenous people in the region and nationally.

I know there are many who have been eagerly awaiting the conclusion of this search and the appointment of our first Vice-Provost, Indigenous Relations. My thanks to all those who supported the search process, and specifically to the committee who devoted their time and energy to this search (members of which are listed below).

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This is an exciting milestone in Dalhousie's work to advance Indigenization, decolonization, and reconciliation within the university and in higher education more broadly. John will be working closely with the constellation of people and units involved in Indigenous initiatives at Dalhousie, with senior leaders in Faculties and units across the university, and with Dalhousie's Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC) to develop, implement, and promote high-visibility, high-impact initiatives to advance necessary and constructive change. I look forward to supporting him in this important work. Please join us in welcoming John to Dalhousie.

Search committee membership

Marty Leonard, Search Committee Chair and former Acting Provost (current Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies)

Theresa Rajack-Talley, former Vice-Provost Equity & Inclusion

Graham Gagnon, former Dean, Faculty of Architecture and Planning (current Acting Vice-President Research and Innovation)

Kelsey Jones, Director, Indigenous Blacks and Mi'kmaq Initiative, Schulich School of Law

Sheila Wildeman, Associate Professor of Law, Associate Director, Health Law Institute

Cheryl Fraser, Chair, Dalhousie Board of Governors

Ann Sylliboy, Post-Secondary Consultant, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey

John Paul, Executive Director, Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Secretariat

Art Stevens, Director of Educational Services, Millbrook First Nation

Dalhousie University operates in the unceded territories of the Mi'kmaw, Wolastoqey, and Peskotomuhkati Peoples. These sovereign nations hold inherent rights as the original peoples of these lands, and we each carry collective obligations under the Peace and Friendship Treaties. Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and Treaty rights in Canada.

We recognize that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose histories, legacies and contributions have enriched that part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years.