

ADVICE TO MINISTER

<p>CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE</p> <p>Ministry of Advanced Education and Skill Training Dated: Sept 1, 2022 Minister Responsible: Anne Kang</p>	<p>EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY FACULTY MEMBER – ALLEGED FALSE INDIGENOUS IDENTITY</p>
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ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **As Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training, I am committed to working with Indigenous peoples and post-secondary partners to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.**
- **These allegations of false claims to Indigenous identity are concerning, and Emily Carr University is working to evaluate its hiring processes.**
- **Emily Carr University will make sure their hiring practices align with B.C.'s commitment to reconciliation – and will continue to work towards being an inclusive environment where Indigenous students, staff and faculty can thrive.**

IF ASKED ABOUT THE MINISTRY'S INVOLVEMENT:

- **Emily Carr University is responsible for hiring their own faculty and staff and are undertaking a review because of this situation.**
- **We are focused on Emily Carr continuing to meet the standard of excellence expected of our public post-secondary institutions.**

IF ASKED ABOUT WHAT THE MINISTRY IS DOING TO ADVANCE RECONCILIATION:

- **With Indigenous and post-secondary partners, we are working on actions that respond to the TRC's Calls to Action and aligns with B.C.'s commitments in the Declaration Act.**
- **These include:**
 - **Investing in Indigenous language revitalization by dedicating \$2 million to support the Indigenous Language Fluency Degree program;**
 - **Establishing the first-ever Indigenous law program at the University of Victoria.**

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- For the last four years, all 25 public post-secondary institutions have had persons who identify as Indigenous on their boards of governors since July 2018, compared to 11 institutions in 2012.
- In 2019, we invested \$2.7 million to increase the number of Indigenous teacher education seats and support teacher education programs to include Indigenous content in their curriculum, addressing TRC Call to Action #62 and empowering Indigenous students to see themselves in their teachers.
- We have provided \$4.1 million in Indigenous Emergency Assistance Funding to more than 5,500 Indigenous students since 2017 to assist with unforeseen financial needs such as medical expenses or family emergencies that require travel home.
- We are co-developing, with Indigenous and post-secondary partners, a revised policy framework that responds to the TRC's Calls to Action and aligns with B.C.'s commitments in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

BACKGROUND:

In spring 2021, allegations emerged from an anonymous Twitter account that questioned the Indigenous identity of Gina Adams, an assistant professor in the Emily Carr University of Art and Design (ECUAD's) Faculty of Culture and Community.

Adams was hired in 2019 as part of a group hiring initiative to increase the number of Indigenous faculty at ECUAD. As part of the hiring process, applicants were asked to write a statement that identifies them as an Indigenous person, as expressed by their current connection to a First Nation, Inuit or Métis community or their personal family narratives that describe their connection to such a community. These statements were evaluated by members of the hiring committee and discussed with candidates during the interview process. ECU is confident that the hiring process followed best practice according to 2019 standards.

Adams continues to maintain that the claims against her are false and unsubstantiated. The allegations made against Adams in 2021 did not result in public backlash or significant media interest. However, it has come to the attention of ECUAD that *Maclean's* magazine is planning to publish a story about the allegations against Adams in September 2022, authored by ECUAD's former communications manager who worked directly on the issue and has substantial insider knowledge related to ECUAD's internal handling of the matter.

Furthermore, the reporter for *Maclean's* has stated that the forthcoming article will contain researched evidence to substantiate the allegations that Adams has falsified her Indigenous identity. ECUAD and AEST are not privy to what this evidence will be.

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Adams resigned from ECUAD in August 2022.

MEDIA INTEREST:

In May 2021, the Boston Globe wrote an article titled, “[Should museums verify claims of Indigenous ancestry? Fruitlands show postponed over this ‘profoundly divisive’ issue](#)”:

“In March, just as an exhibition of work by Native American artists was coming together at the Fruitlands Museum, questions cropped up about the ancestry of the show’s co-curator.

A debate about authenticity ensued — who’s Native American and who isn’t — and now the show’s opening has been delayed, giving museum officials a chance to address concerns expressed by Native American artists about co-curator Gina Adams’s claim to be of Indigenous descent.”

A [June 2021 story](#) on Indianz.com also outlined the Fruitlands museum incident and Adams’ claims regarding her heritage.

Approval Required	Approved By	Date
GCPE Mgr	Melody Wey	Aug. 31, 2022
Program executive director	Michael Snoddon Fiona Cubitt Executive Director, Indigenous Policy & Engagement	Sept. 1, 2022
ADM(s)	Nicola Lemmer	Sept. 1, 2022
GCPE CD	Lisanne Bowness	Sept. 1, 2022
DM (if necessary – Melody or Lisanne will send to DM)	Shannon Baskerville	
MO – Melody or Lisanne to send		

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE	
<p>Emily Carr University (ECU)</p> <p>Prepared by: Alexandra Korinowsky, Communications Manager, ECU</p> <p>Date: Sept. 2, 2022</p>	<p>Issue:</p> <p>Maclean's Magazine Article Re: Allegations against faculty member Gina Adams, false claim to Indigenous Identity</p>

Key Messages:

- Emily Carr University is committed to reconciliation, Indigenization and decolonization, and that includes our approach to hiring Indigenous faculty.
- We take the allegations very seriously that a faculty member made a false claim to Indigenous identity.
- The faculty member in question is no longer with Emily Carr University.
- The complex matter of confirming identity when recruiting Indigenous faculty has been the subject of debate within universities and Indigenous communities in recent years – and no consensus has been reached.
- Along with our peers, ECU is grappling with these complexities as perspectives evolve and new best practices emerge.
- ECU will undertake an Indigenous-led third-party review of our current hiring practices to ensure our policies evolve at the pace of this ongoing national conversation.
- Emily Carr University is committed to making the necessary changes to make sure our internal practices align with our deep commitment to reconciliation – and safeguard ECU as an inclusive environment where Indigenous students, staff and faculty can thrive.

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Background:

In spring 2021, allegations emerged from an anonymous Twitter account that questioned the Indigenous identity of Gina Adams, an assistant professor in ECU's Faculty of Culture and Community.

Adams was hired in 2019 as part of a group hiring initiative to increase the number of Indigenous faculty at ECU. As part of the hiring process, applicants were asked to write a statement that identifies them as an Indigenous person as expressed by their current connection to a First Nation, Inuit or Métis community, and/or their personal family narratives that describe their connection to such a community. The hiring process was rigorous and incorporated interviews with ECU's hiring committee, which included Indigenous faculty and staff, a presentation on their art practice and candidacy to the university community, as well as one-on-one meetings with Indigenous students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty members. ECU's hiring process followed best practice at the time in 2019.

The allegations made against Adams in 2021 did not result in public backlash or media interest. However, ECU has been notified that Maclean's magazine plans to publish a story in September or October (TBC) 2022 that will deepen the allegations against Adams. The story will be authored by ECU's former Communications Manager, Michelle Cyca. Cyca is an Indigenous woman who worked directly on the Gina Adams issue in 2021 and has substantial insider knowledge related to the university's internal management of the matter.

Maclean's has stated the article will contain new information about Adams' genealogy and evidence that Adams has falsified her Indigenous identity. ECU asked Maclean's if they would share this information/evidence in advance of the article's publication date, but Maclean's declined.

To date, ECU has responded to a request from Maclean's for a statement and to fact check various points that will be raised in the article. ECU's statement was high-level and fact-based and:

- Confirmed ECU's commitment to reconciliation, Indigenization and decolonization;
- Confirmed the nature of the hiring process for designated Indigenous faculty positions that was used in 2019 and stressed that it was best practice at the time;
- Acknowledged that new information put forward by Maclean's will be considered;
- Provided context of the ongoing conversation/debate about proof of identity within Indigenous communities and post-secondary institutions (i.e. no consensus has been reached about new best practices);
- Shared information about steps ECU has taken to evolve hiring practices for roles designated for Indigenous candidates.

Adams continues to maintain that the claims against her are false and unsubstantiated; however, Adams tendered her resignation on August , 2022 , s.13

ECU has committed to undertaking a third-party review of its hiring practices for positions designated for Indigenous candidates.

Commented [3]: NOTE: As of Sept. 2, Maclean's is unable to confirm the date this article will be published.

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Timeline:

2019: Gina Adams was hired as part of a group hiring initiative to increase the number of Indigenous faculty at ECU.

2020: ECU began working to improve and evolve its hiring practices with respect to BIPOC considerations and restricted positions. Much work was undertaken in 2020 with BIPOC Executive Search Inc. to conduct mandatory unconscious bias and diversity training for hiring committees and to obtain support for restricted hirings. ECU Deans went through training on how to lead processes of Indigenous and restricted hiring, with emphasis on how to probe a candidate's connection to community. HR advisors completing OCAD training on hiring for decolonization, diversity and inclusion within creative industries.

March 2021: First allegation came forward on Twitter by an anonymous user.

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April 2021: Allegations triggered ECU's duty to inquire process, which resulted in members of ECU's internal indigenous community, human resources and academic affairs engaging with Adams to learn more about her claimed identity. HR and academic affairs were notified by members of ECU's internal Indigenous community that they supported Adams' claim based on her genuine belief in her heritage statement. Adams strongly maintains the allegations against her are false and unsubstantiated. This internal review satisfied the university's duty to inquire and no further action was taken specific to her employment as a faculty member.

January 2022: ECU's former Communications Manager, Michelle Cyca submitted her resignation in writing and left the university in March, saying she planned to focus on her writing career.

July 2022: ECU was notified by Maclean's of the forthcoming article authored by Cyca. s.13
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Thank you for letting me know about the article you are planning to write for McLean's magazine.

As you proceed with the preparation of your article, I must caution you to be mindful of your obligations as a former employee of Emily Carr University. As you know, you had access to confidential information in the course of your employment regarding various aspects of the issue you are proposing to write about. You have a legal obligation to protect the confidentiality of that information, and not to disclose it or use it in any way in connection with your article. You are of course free to use information that is in the public domain, but you must ensure that the confidential information you were entrusted with is not used or referred to in any way.

I encourage you to discuss this issue with the legal department at McLean’s magazine, as they may not be aware that as an Emily Carr employee, you had access to confidential information in this area.

If you have questions about your obligations, or about whether or not particular information you had access to during your employment is confidential, please don’t hesitate to reach out.

August 2022: ECU secured Elettra Communications to assist with issues management.

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August 2022: Adams tendered her resignation on August 25, 2022,s.13

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August 2022: ECU made the decision to undertake an Indigenous-led third-party review of hiring practices for positions designated for Indigenous faculty.

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Environmental Scan:

The following is a summary of how other Canadian post-secondary institutions have handled questions of falsified Indigenous identity.

Situation	Institution’s Response
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA	
Amie Wolf, an adjunct professor of Indigenous studies at the University of British Columbia who claimed to be Métis and Mi’kmaq, was fired amid questions about her Indigenous heritage. She had been taken at her word regarding her Indigenous ancestry.	EMPLOYMENT STATUS - Wolf’s <u>appointment in the faculty of education was terminated</u> within a week of the allegations. However, there were mitigating HR issues in this case. INVESTIGATION / POLICY CHANGES - No review or policy changes have been announced.
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY	

<p>SFU Galleries curator, <u>Cheyenne Turions</u>, was accused of misrepresenting herself as having Indigenous ancestry.</p>	<p>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turions resigned - SFU clarified that Turions was hired based on her experience, not her ancestry <p>REVIEW / POLICY CHANGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "SFU Galleries is now moving through a process that demands deep consultation and careful listening to many different people — most importantly, to members of the Indigenous art community and Indigenous university faculty and staff"
<p>QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY</p>	
<p>Allegation that <u>six instructors, professors and associates at Queen's had falsely claimed Indigenous identity.</u></p>	<p>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initially defended the individuals. - <u>Queen's has terminated its relationship with one former associate.</u> Five of the six individuals accused of falsifying their Indigenous identities remain active with the school <p>INVESTIGATIONS / POLICY CHANGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Commissioned a Recommendations Report from Third Party.</u> (First Peoples Group, an Indigenous advisory firm based in Ottawa.) - Queens has accepted the recommendations in principle. The report recommended removing the six from positions of influence over Indigenous courses until they can prove their Indigenous status, so presumably this will happen. - Queens has committed to striking an Indigenous Oversight Council which will guide the university as it works through the report's recommendations and begins to implement a new and more comprehensive approach to Indigenous identity that is fair and equitable.
<p>UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN</p>	

<p>Dr. Carrie Bourassa was a professor who claimed without evidence to be Indigenous.</p> <p>The University had taken her word regarding her Indigenous ancestry. She benefited professionally from this in terms of hiring, advancement and other opportunities.</p>	<p>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allegations were made in October 2021. University put Bourassa on administrative leave by October 31, 2021. - June 1, 2023 the University announced that Bourassa had resigned. <p>INVESTIGATIONS / POLICY CHANGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - University <u>commissioned an investigation</u> into Bourassa's claims and into their handling of the case. When Bourassa resigned, the University cancelled the part of the investigation related to her claims. - Established a task force to create a policy requiring people who declare they are Indigenous to back it up with documentation. The 23-member task force included elders; Saskatoon Tribal Council Chief Mark Arcand and Indigenous staff, students and community members. - Based on their recommendations, the University <u>announced a new policy</u> requiring students and faculty to provide documentation proving membership to an Indigenous community when applying for any job or opportunity that is reserved for Indigenous peoples.
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CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY	
<p>Jessica Bardill, a professor of Native American and Indigenous Literature at Concordia University, had been suspended after her claims of Cherokee ancestry were called into question.</p> <p>She had been taken at her word regarding her Indigenous ancestry.</p>	<p>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - University did not comment when story broke, citing privacy. - Bardill still appears as on the Concordia website as a faculty member. - Following December 2021 news coverage, there has not been follow up. <p>INVESTIGATION / POLICY CHANGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No review or policy changes have been announced.

Prepared by: Alexandra Korinowsky, Communications Manager, ECU
Reviewed by: Rob Maguire, Executive Director, Communications, Marketing + Public Affairs, ECU
Approved by: Gillian Siddall, President + Vice-Chancellor, ECU

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ADVICE TO MINISTER

<p>CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE</p> <p>Ministry of Advanced Education and Skill Training Dated: Sept. 9, 2022 Minister Responsible: Anne Kang</p>	<p>EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY – ALLEGED INDIGENOUS IDENTITY</p>
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IF ASKED ABOUT WHAT THE MINISTRY IS DOING TO ADVANCE RECONCILIATION:

- With Indigenous and post-secondary partners, we are working on actions that respond to the TRC's Calls to Action and aligns with B.C.'s commitments in the Declaration Act.
- These include:
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 - Establishing the first-ever Indigenous law program at the University of Victoria.

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- **For the last four years, all 25 public post-secondary institutions have had persons who identify as Indigenous on their boards of governors since July 2018, compared to 11 institutions in 2012.**
- **In 2019, we invested \$2.7 million to increase the number of Indigenous teacher education seats and support teacher education programs to include Indigenous content in their curriculum, addressing TRC Call to Action #62 and empowering Indigenous students to see themselves in their teachers.**
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BACKGROUND:

On Sept. 6, 2022, Maclean's published an article, 'The curious Case of Gina Adams: A "Pretendian" investigation about a professor hired by Emily Carr University to recruit Indigenous faculty. The article outlines the professor's false claims to Indigenous identity. The professor resigned from her position at Emily Carr on Aug. 25, 2022.

Emily Carr will be undertaking an Indigenous-led external review to make recommendations for how we assess identity in a culturally-appropriate way when hiring for positions designated for Indigenous candidates.

The article is authored by a former communications manager at Emily Carr who has substantial insider knowledge related to Emily Carr's internal handling of the matter.

In spring 2021, allegations emerged from an anonymous Twitter account that questioned the Indigenous identity of Gina Adams, an assistant professor in the Emily Carr University of Art and Design Faculty of Culture and Community.

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MEDIA INTEREST: Media coverage of the Maclean's article includes Vancouver Sun and DailyHive. No media requests to the Ministry.

In May 2021, the Boston Globe wrote an article titled, "[Should museums verify claims of Indigenous ancestry? Fruitlands show postponed over this 'profoundly divisive' issue](#)":

"In March, just as an exhibition of work by Native American artists was coming together at the Fruitlands Museum, questions cropped up about the ancestry of the show's co-curator.

A debate about authenticity ensued — who's Native American and who isn't — and now the show's opening has been delayed, giving museum officials a chance to address concerns expressed by Native American artists about co-curator Gina Adams's claim to be of Indigenous descent."

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