

REPORT OF THE CHAMPLAIN COMMITTEE

Fall 2022



Trent University respectfully acknowledges it is located on the treaty and traditional territory of the *Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg*. [We offer our gratitude](#) to First Peoples for their care for, and teachings about, our earth and our relations. May we honour those teachings.

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1. The Striking of the Committee and Its Composition

In November 2021, President Leo Groarke formed a committee to consider and reflect upon the legacy Samuel de Champlain as it relates to Champlain College, Trent University and their communities.

President Groarke's message to the Trent community:

Colleagues,

In a spirit of reconciliation, and in a broader context which recognizes that universities have a special role to play in discussion and debate about important contemporary issues, the University and Champlain College are establishing a committee to consider and reflect upon the Champlain legacy at Trent. The committee's deliberations are rooted in questions that have been raised about the Champlain bust and associated artwork.

I appreciate the help and advice of many people as I have reached out to members of our community who can bring relevant expertise and experience to this discussion (and other discussions that could result from it). The Committee will be chaired by Marilyn Burns, our Vice President of Colleges. The Committee itself will determine a process for reviewing the history of Samuel de Champlain as it relates to Trent University, and will encourage outreach with the Trent community and local First Nations. A special effort will be made to consult with Trent alumni, and especially Champlain alumni, on the questions the committee considers. The Committee will aim to bring a report to the Office of the President at the end of the winter 2022 term.

[The members of the Champlain Committee](#) include students, alumni, faculty and staff with a mix of expertise and perspectives that include Indigenous knowledge and scholarship; ethics; history and heritage. I want to personally thank them for taking time out of their busy schedules to be a part of this important discussion. I have included a list of committee members and a brief profile of their backgrounds below.

Best Regards,

Leo

Leo Groarke
President & Vice-Chancellor
705-748-1011 ext. 1090
trentu.ca/president
Instagram: [@trentuprezleo](https://www.instagram.com/trentuprezleo)

Nicole Bell '86 is *Anishinaabe*, bear clan from *Kitigan Zibi* First Nation in Maniwaki, Quebec. An alumna of Trent, she earned her B.A. and her Ph.D. here and is currently an associate professor in the School of Education. Her research interests include Indigenous culture-based education, land-based learning, infusion of Indigenous knowledge into public schooling and teacher education, decolonization and healing, and Indigenous research theory and methodology.

Marilyn Burns (Chair) '00 is the vice-president Communications & Enrolment at Trent University, overseeing Trent's five colleges. She is a Peter Robinson alumna; joined Julian Blackburn and then Gzowski College; studied at Traill College for her Masters; and is a fellow of Champlain College. Her scholarly interests include semiotics and the role of words and imagery in our lives (and in promoting the University's reputation and identity).

Gracie Crafts '18 is *Anishinaabe* from *Wasauksing* First Nation and a student in the Indigenous Environmental Science BSc. She is the senior fire keeper at the First Peoples House of Learning tipi where she has been able to work closely with elders from Curve Lake and visit with knowledge keepers from across North America / Turtle Island. Gracie is the vice-president of student engagement and orientation for the Trent University Native Association (TUNA) and was an Orientation Week leader this past September for Gzowski College.

Yancy Craig '95 is a proud alumnus of Trent and Champlain College, whose family connections are Oneida from Six Nations of the Grand River. He is vice-president of Indigenous and Government Relations at Indspire. Previously, he was a senior advisor at the Assembly of First Nations, having been director of strategic development at the National Association of Friendship Centres. Yancy has also held roles in the Federal Government that include Environment Canada, and Aboriginal and Northern Development Canada, with a focus on economic development, international affairs, and social policy.

Michael Eamon is the principal of Traill College and a professor of public history. He has contributed research and articles on Trent University's series of 50th Anniversary plaques. Michael was the co-author of the University's Heritage Stewardship Policy and co-chairs Trent's Heritage Committee. Formerly a plaque researcher Ontario Heritage Trust (including for the 400th anniversary plaque of Champlain in Ontario), Michael was formerly a manager at Parks Canada and at Library and Archives Canada, dealing with historical interpretation and exhibitions.

Harvey McCue (Waubageshig) '66, CM, MA (McMaster) is *Anishinaabe* from the Georgina Island First Nation. He was part of the first cohort to move into Champlain College residence in January 1967, was the third president of the Champlain College Student Council, and remains a fellow of Champlain College. Harvey also served as chair of the Otonabee College Names Committee that recommended the theatre be named after Chanie (Charlie) Wenjack. Previous to becoming a consultant specializing in Aboriginal issues, Harvey helped found the Native Studies Department at Trent where he taught for 14 years.

Kate Norlock is the Kenneth Mark Drain chair in ethics. She has been a professor in the Department of Philosophy for 11 years and serves as a faculty fellow at Lady Eaton College. Kate's research interests include the ethics of complaint, forgiveness, and anti-oppression practices. She brings experience from her roles as an academic program chair, faculty union executive member, and service on presidential advisory committees. She is a newcomer and now new citizen of Canada.

Emma Phillips is a student in the Bachelor of Environmental Science and Studies program. Now prime minister of Champlain College Cabinet, she has three years of experience with the Cabinet, holding the roles of cultural affairs representative and community and sustainability rep. Emma has been involved with the orientation team, most recently as senior leader. In her work with Parks Canada, she worked with Indigenous partners on education and conservation decisions and projects.

François Senécal '83 is an alumnus of Trent and was a member of Champlain College. He has a B.A. in Philosophy from Trent and his LLB from Université de Montréal. As a student, he served on the University senate and was president of Champlain College Cabinet. Today he practices commercial and corporate law at DSL LLP and serves as a volunteer co-chair of Champlain College Endowment Committee.

2. Principles and Process

With a mandate from the President, the Committee chose to begin its deliberations by defining Principles and Process.

Champlain Committee Principles and Process – December 14, 2021

Background

The Champlain Committee at Trent University was established during a time of heightened awareness of the impacts of colonization and the imperative for truth and reconciliation, as laid out in the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) Report and its 94 “Calls to

Action”¹. More recently, discoveries of hundreds of unmarked graves at the sites of former residential schools have galvanized the nation’s attention and intensified debate about the legacy and commemoration of colonial figures.

At Trent University, questions have arisen at various times about Champlain College, its namesake Samuel de Champlain (c. 1567-1635), and the name itself, as well as artwork and sculpture in the form of a bust displayed at the College (see the excerpt from Principal Tina Fridgen’s summary in Appendix A). September 30, 2021 marked the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, recognized at the University through a Treaty Rock installation at Symons Campus and a Treaty Wall at the Durham GTA campus.

Trent created North America’s first Indigenous Studies program in 1969. The University’s 1993 Statement of Affirmation and Support (see Appendix C) further upheld the institution’s commitment to Indigenous knowledge and incorporating traditional teachings and perspectives into its curricular and extracurricular programming.

Goal

In light of the above, the Champlain Committee will endeavour to provide a report that gives guidance and recommendations to the University regarding the representation of Samuel de Champlain as it relates to the identity of the college (possibly including but not limited to imagery, language, objects and contextual information).

Principles and Process

To do so, the Committee will:

- Gain an awareness of current questions and conversations about the Champlain College identity from rights holders, various stakeholders, and representatives from in and around the Trent community;
- Come to a contemporary understanding of the legacy of Samuel de Champlain, informed by historical accounts and scholarly material, as well as current understandings of colonial figures;
- Provide due consideration and exceptional access to, advice from and dialogue with Elders, Chiefs and delegations;
- Receive input and review perspectives from a variety of groups and individuals, including students, faculty, staff and alumni as well as experts and others who may wish to contribute written submissions;
- Consider what might constitute an approach that is distinctly Trent.

Timing

The Committee endeavoured to complete its report within the 2022 academic year, but extended the timeframe to allow more time to hear from local and Indigenous groups.

¹ National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (University of Manitoba, Reports, Truth and Reconciliation Reports, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, (2015): 1-11, https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wpcontent/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf, Accessed on 5 July 2022

3. Our Approach

3.1 Deliberations

Based on the agreed-upon Principles and Process, with its stated goal to provide a report to the President, the Committee determined a way forward by reviewing existing reports, resources and materials, and arranging for outreach through delegations and written submissions. Invitations, postings, emails and reminders were integral to the process.

Groups and audiences invited to provide input were representatives from:

- The Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers Council
- Local First Nations
- Métis Council
- Alumni Council
- Alumni
- Student groups:
 - Trent Central Student Association (TCSA)
 - Trent Durham Student Association (TDSA)
 - Trent Graduate Student Association (TGSA)
 - Trent University Native Association (TUNA)
 - College Cabinets: Champlain, Lady Eaton, Traill, Otonabee, Gzowski
- Current Students
- Faculty and Staff

3.2 Communications

A website (www.trentu.ca/champlain-committee) was launched to provide an overview of the process, background information on Samuel de Champlain and the connections between Champlain's identity to Trent and Champlain College, along with access to the sources reviewed and discussed by the committee, including a bibliography of readings, archival documents, other university reports, and video resources. Information about a planned student event was also posted and promoted online and on campus. A submission form as well as an email address encouraged written submissions. Audiences were made aware of the site and the opportunity to provide input through a communications plan that included email, postings to the University's daily news online at trentu.ca and the University's "myTrent" portal, digital signage on campus, and, in the case of the student event, a poster campaign throughout campus.

3.3 Documentary Sources Consulted

The Committee reviewed and discussed an extensive number of resources including scholarly and historical works on Samuel de Champlain, archival documents, reports from other universities that had undertaken such reviews, and video resources (a selection of which can be found in Appendix B)². In addition, a summary of the history of the issue by Champlain Principal Tina Fridgen contributed to the information along with previous articles over time from the student newspaper, *Arthur*. As topical news items and articles related to similar processes or issues appeared in the national media, the Committee also reviewed and discussed these for comparable concerns, differing issues and learnings. During the Committee's discussions and deliberations, highlights from these sources were integrated with insights from delegations and written submissions.

3.4 Outreach and Delegations

Having identified Elders as a key group in its principles and process, the Committee made a point of meeting with the Elders, both at the beginning of the process and closer to the end, and added a special meeting at the request

² Noting a gap in Indigenous scholarship, an addendum was added to Appendix B with sources that were submitted for consideration, to provide further reading and resources.

Meetings with the Elders were positive and encouraged ongoing discussion. The Committee made a point of noting the status the Elders hold within their First Nations communities and the weight their comments and reflections carry as a result of this.

Outreach took place through invitations to key rights holders, stakeholders and interested parties. Delegations were encouraged from First Nations as well as the Métis Nation through the local Métis Council, and included leaders from the Trent University Alumni Association.

Invitations were proactively sent out to the following and communications actively urged connection and dialogue, if not in-person then via email or the submission form available online:

- Curve Lake First Nation
- Hiawatha First Nation
- Alderville First Nation
- Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation
- Peterborough and District Wapiti Métis Council
- Alumni Association leadership

As well as outreach to representatives from:

- Kawartha Nishnawbe
- Huron Wendat Nation
- Haudenosaunee

In addition to the meeting and updates with the Elders, the Committee received delegations from a First Nations Chief; representatives of a local Indigenous community; and the Co- President of the Alumni Association. All brought a welcome perspective, considered and nuanced, on the issue of Champlain and what the Committee might consider (see Summary of Discussions below). A written submission from another First Nations Chief in the form of a letter supporting a student's concerns about Champlain was received via an email from the student to the Committee. Most First Nations/ Métis representatives who were contacted replied, but several chose not to actively connect with the Committee or provide input. Finally, the Committee noted that a Haudenosaunee submission would have provided additional perspective in light of the consequences of Champlain's participation in the conflict between the Huron Wendat and the Haudenosaunee.

3.4.1 Summary of Discussions and Points Shared through Delegations

To honour the confidentiality of the delegations and the discussions that took place with the Committee, the following broadly touches on key points and anonymizes the input received.

At these meetings, it was clear that the history between Trent and Treaty Holder First Nations communities and the ongoing deep-rooted and positive relationships are important to recognize and honour. Trepidation with regard to outcomes of the Champlain Committee process was shared due to decisions taken in investigations at other universities, where name changes and the removal of statues have been known to cause a backlash to First Nations, even when these decisions on re-namings or the removal of icons were made outside of the region or without consideration or inclusion of Indigenous perspectives with local First Nations.

Specific to Champlain, there was a comment that the records, writings and history left behind by Champlain have been helpful to First Nations in identifying information and areas for land claims. The Committee was urged by various presenters to:

1. Own the conversation;
2. Make it meaningful;

3. Not erase history³, no matter how difficult.

Nonetheless, Champlain was also seen as symbolic of, and integral to, a larger colonial impact that resulted in loss of land, language, culture and the lives of Indigenous peoples. Some felt an urgency to change the name and symbolism associated with the college. Others urged that Trent needs to underscore its relationship with the *Anishinaabe* through recognition, noting that there is a fundamental difference between those that Indigenous people hold in high esteem and individuals that colonial people celebrate and commemorate. To the viewpoint that recognizes the difference between morals and values now and 400 years ago, there was a challenge that this kind of moral relativism was not consistently applied to other historical events.

Still another view was that, while Champlain is just a name, it is also an established name identified with its importance as a brand that resonates with some alumni and is recognized as unique aspect of Trent in the larger community. Even so, College associations can be more about the architecture, people, residence, and the river/environment. Often, for students and alumni, it is those elements that form the idea of community at Champlain.

All delegations recognized the complexity of perspectives on the matter and expressed respect for the variety of opinions the Committee would need to consider. There was a mutual expression of gratitude and respect between the delegations and the Committee, with many thanking the Committee membership for taking on such an important yet challenging issue that inspires passionate and diverse responses. In discussing these delegations, the Committee recognized that the differing opinions were not expressed as divisive or oppositional to one another and that the presenters inspired ideas and solutions that need not be seen as mutually exclusive.

Relationships and Connections

It is worthwhile noting that there were several requests for inclusion on the Committee both before and after its formation. In some cases, these were received partway through the process as the Committee's work was already underway. These requests were discussed at length by the Committee and considered. There was consensus from the Committee that membership had been carefully contemplated with a range of Indigenous representation and knowledge/experience in matters related to Indigenous concerns, and truth and reconciliation, including a recognized Elder from another territory. The Committee's make-up, combined with the active solicitation of delegations and submissions, provided the Committee with the various perspectives and input required to investigate the question of Champlain as a Trent and Champlain College-centred issue.

3.5 Student Event: "Who Was this Champlain Guy Anyway?"

The Committee held a student event to allow a dynamic dialogue on the question of Samuel de Champlain's legacy. In an interdisciplinary approach, three groups (or teams) of students were provided with one reading each at the event, and were asked to present their findings, points of view on Champlain, and questions that remained for them. The readings were selected to provide differing critical perspectives on Champlain, in the works of: David Hackett Fischer; Elwood Jones, Peter Adams and Al Brunger; and Bruce Trigger.⁴

The event was organized by Committee members Professor Michael Eamon, Professor Kathryn Norlock, Emma Phillips and Gracie Crafts, and held at the Champlain Council Chambers in-person with an online zoom option for attendance. A recorded version of the event was also delivered to those who were unable to attend and [posted](#) on the Champlain Committee website after all permissions were received by the participants. The event was attended by students, including members of Champlain cabinet, faculty, staff, alumni and community members

³ The Committee acknowledges the phrase "don't erase history" is problematic and potentially inflammatory given the impacts of colonization and residential schools on Indigenous culture and language. The phrase was included because it was shared by some of the First Nations people who offered input to the committee.

⁴ Specifically, David Hackett Fischer, *Champlain's Dream*, (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2008); Elwood Jones, Peter Adams and Al Brunger, eds., *Finding Champlain's Dream: Champlain, First Nations, and French Culture in Peterborough and the Kawarthas*, (Peterborough: Trent Valley Archives, 2015); and Bruce G. Trigger, "Champlain Judged by His Indian Policy: A Different View of Early Canadian History," *Anthropologies* 13,1/2 (1971): 85-114.

and a recorded copy was provided to the student newspaper, *Arthur*.

Michael Eamon facilitated the discussions following each presentation and, due to illness among the students from Team Trigger, presented on their behalf with the help of the students' notes and input. The event was framed by a welcome by the Champlain Committee chair Marilyn Burns, and an opening introduction and a closing synopsis by Kathryn Norlock, who began with the land acknowledgement, adding, "May we honour those teachings in our actions and in our interactions as we learn together collaboratively which is what we will work together to do tonight." In her closing remarks she noted that the event raised issues of who writes history, the importance of oral history and the perspectives of Indigenous people, and "what can never be answered."

Thanking the students for their thoughtful presentations – and students Gracie Crafts and Emma Phillips for their ongoing work on the Committee – Prof. Norlock acknowledged the students' appreciation for the grey areas of history, congratulated them on their insight in questioning the perspective of those writing, and she urged ongoing learning and questioning. The event was followed by a dinner at Alumni House where discussion continued well into the evening.

4. Written Submissions Received

Written submissions were received through the online form provided at the Champlain Committee website and through emails to the champlaincommittee@trentu.ca address, as well as several messages directly to the President (mostly received prior to the formation of the Committee). The Committee reviewed all of the input received, which was summarized regularly to provide an indication of this input. A summary follows.

4.1 Number and Sources

Total Written Submissions: 144

- Alumni: 102 (mostly Champlain Alumni)
- Undergraduate Students: 17
- Community: 4
- Staff: 10
- Faculty: 11 (5 are also Alumni)

Among these respondents were contributors who self-identified as Indigenous included Haudenosaunee, Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, Mi'kmak students, Métis Nation staff, Indigenous alumni, and Ojibway and other unidentified Indigenous community members.

4.2 Recurring Themes/Concerns Raised

The ideas about and perceptions of Champlain in the responses were diverse, but largely centred around two characteristics of Champlain's biography: his relationships with Indigenous People in Canada (including both negative interactions as well as the benefits provided by the written record he created and his role in the creation of Canada (viewed from both the destructive impacts and the nation building that resulted).

Negatives/Critiques of Champlain

- Harm to Indigenous, First Nation and Métis people
 - "Perhaps Champlain did not cause direct harm to the Mississauga people of the area, he did cause the death of Haudenosaunee people. Having a college named after a man who slaughtered their people is unfair and unkind."
 - "Regardless of Champlain's own personal actions - he was a part of Canada's colonial legacy; a colonial legacy that lead [sic] to the subjugation and forced assimilation of indigenous peoples."
 - "How are Indigenous students supposed to feel comfortable and welcome in a school that continues to idolize and give a platform to a known colonizer? How are non-Indigenous students at Trent supposed to learn about reconciliation and allyship towards their Indigenous peers when the name Champlain is often portrayed in a positive light? I respectfully ask that the name of Champlain College be changed. In choosing a new name, I believe that outreach with Indigenous students and faculty, as well as the nearby Curve Lake First Nation needs to be a priority."
- Role in Colonization of Canada
 - "Although he may not have been 'violent' towards the people of the area, he still contributed widely to the colonization of Canada. This in itself is unforgivable."
 - "Champlain has a destructive legacy, despite his important role in the development of Canada as we know it today. I believe that this destruction and pain outweighs any beneficial things he may have done, and using his name in the college system seems to disregard that damage and celebrate him."
- Name Change

- “I say loudly, a name change is embarrassingly, even shamefully overdue.”

Support for Champlain

- Key part of Canada’s history / Lived in a different time
 - “Without explorers like Champlain, Canada would not exist, Trent would not exist.”
 - “No historical figure of importance from the 16th century can meet the moral standards of the 21st century. This man led over 20 trans-Atlantic crossings in his life in 1500s technology. He was a man of his time and not out of step with his station. He, in fact, strove to be so much more as a navigator and explorer. Our country would not be what it is today without his immense contribution.”
 - “He fought wars and was brutal and lived 400 years ago so the bar for what could make him especially horrible needs to be pretty high.”
 - “You cannot look at these people from the perspective of the 21st Century because a completely different culture existed for all of them. Murder, slavery, genocide was accepted and practiced by practically every culture, including indigenous ones.”
 - “Any naming committee must use as its starting point, 50 years from now, and try to imagine what will not have negative associations in the future, even if it does not in the present. However, I do believe the best option is to retain the name and use it as an educational tool. I am a member of the LGBTQ community. If anyone historically associated with anti-gay views and actions were to become the criteria for removing statues and re-naming institutions, we would be left with no one of influence in the history of Canada to honour.”
 - “Renaming anything to avoid uncomfortable parts of history seems to me to be a way of denying the past and simply trying to pretend things have always been done and thought of the way they currently are, which is the opposite of what institutes of higher education ought to do.”
- Some records detail Champlain’s efforts to understand and form relationships with Indigenous and First Nations peoples
 - “If we can trust his own account of his travels, as well as those of his biographers, he treated Indigenous peoples – at least those with whom he allied himself – fairly, equitably and with respect. I’ve concluded, I hope correctly, that his Indigenous allies held him in high regard, given that they rescued him and returned him to their lands after he was seriously wounded in a losing battle with the Onandagas of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy in 1615.”
 - “Although Samuel de Champlain waged war against certain Native groups, he also made efforts to understand them and allied with other Native groups. In the context of the 17th century, a period during which racism against Natives was widespread and systemic, I think that his contribution to Canadian history is mixed, but still leaning toward the positive side. His historical writings provide useful light on the ethnology of Native populations.”

Moderate / Neutral

- “Trent taught me the importance of thorough research without a lot of foregone conclusions. It taught me about the importance of considering all sides within the context of history and the future we hope to create. It taught me a LOT about how hard that work can be, because emotions will always run high - and how to harness and not dismiss those emotions, so that we arrive to the work as our whole selves. I also know this work will bridge gaps, between western and Indigenous - and will between communities. It is happening on a person many years in the past, through a lens of history that has been coloured by everything that has been learned since. It is challenging, values-questioning, deep work.”
- “Trent has a rich institutional history. I was admitted to Champlain about two years after the college opened. So those were heady days. I remember the photographs of a youngish Tom Symons at the

laying of the cornerstone of the college by John Robarts and Jean Lesage, the premiers of Ontario and Quebec. Of course helping to build the country was one of Tom's not so modest ambitions and a reason, no doubt, for the name of the college. I feel a pride in that and remember the excitement and pride I had earlier felt at school in the stories of the early explorers and settlers. Stories of course they were, partial truths, no doubt, from a past that is in some ways remote from our understanding. They are important to this day, however, to the person I am, just as their stories are to the First Nations. Once upon a time our stories overlapped rather more than they seem to today. Grievances on all sides, that is the temper of our times."

- "Firstly, I did not know that the name Champlain had been selected by Trent's founders to encourage reconciliation between French and English-speaking Canadians. It seems that is a positive foundation for discussions on what evolution the College identity could take with respect to growing Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Secondly, while I have remained inspired by the College motto "Continuer mes découverts", what do principles of Reconciliation suggest for HOW I and others might live this motto?"

5. Analysis

In the face of such a wide array of differing viewpoints, the Committee discussed challenging questions and substantial issues, not easily answered nor swiftly resolved. A central issue was the thorny question of moral relativism and how we should judge actions taken in a different time that have serious and ongoing repercussions for Indigenous people to this day. The noted biographer David Fischer wrote of “seeking a path of understanding between hagiographers on the one hand and iconoclasts on the other.” He observed that: “(This inquiry) begins not with a thesis or a theory, or an ideology, but with a set of open questions about Champlain. It asks, who is this man? Where did he come from? What did he do? Why did he do it? What difference did he make? Why should we care?”⁵

The diversity of the Committee was helpful in creating an inquiry that considered historical, Indigenous and ethical views of the past along with Elder, student and alumni considerations of the present. A distinct lack of Indigenous scholarship related to Champlain was noted by all on the committee and by students at the student event. In reviewing the final report, the Committee added new information and resources for further reading that will better inform dialogue (see the addendum to Appendix B). In the written submissions, there also appeared to be a range of misunderstandings and mistaken knowledge related to Champlain that speak to a need for ongoing education, information and varied perspectives to inform history.

5.1 Tradition and Reconciliation

5.1.1 Tradition

Tradition links us to the past through ceremony and ritual. It helps us celebrate or honour events or occasions of import that we choose not to forget, for whatever reason. Further, it enables us to identify with an event, an institution, or ceremony at often prescribed times and shared ways. As historian Eric Hobsbawm observed, traditions can bring about social cohesion, legitimize institutions, and inculcate beliefs or value systems⁶. Several traditions were established when Trent University was created to offer students a sense of connection and belonging to the new institution.

Would changing or amending the name of Champlain College eliminate the traditions that have emerged since the founding of the College in January 1965? Are the College traditions such as student events, mottos, and chants, tied inexorably to the historic figure of Samuel de Champlain or are they sufficiently robust and unconnected to Champlain that they will persist regardless of the college name?

One Champlain tradition in particular, *L'Ordre de Bon Temps* or, colloquially, Bon Temps exists only because of Champlain and his effort to help his men endure the winter of 1606 in Port Royal. The first cohort of gentlemen scholars at Champlain established the Bon Temps tradition in the College's inaugural year, 1965, and it has been celebrated annually ever since. In light of students' reports to the Committee that participants do not associate the event with the name, and it is as likely to be called simply a Winter Festival, the loss of the tradition of *L'Ordre de Bon Temps* is not by itself a severe enough reason to argue against a name change. Traditions are invented and can change over time. Nonetheless, the Committee wanted to be respectful of certain traditions, and more importantly, the students who had created them.

5.1.2 Reconciliation

The work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its report marked a significant step forward in the journey to heal survivors of Indian Residential Schools and victims of intergenerational trauma resulting from Indian Residential Schools. The TRC and its 94 Calls to Action have served to increase the awareness and understanding of the profound harm and damages Indian Residential Schools inflicted on more than 100,000 Indigenous youth for over 100 years and the lived experience of all Indigenous people.

There is no direct guidance in the TRC 94 Calls to Action that would inform a decision to remove or retain the

⁵ David Hackett Fischer, *Champlain's Dream*, (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2008), 10-11.

⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 9.

Champlain name at the college. Nonetheless, truth and reconciliation is a process that has just begun and many more steps and actions can be taken to advance its recommendations.

5.2 Context

5.2.1 Past and Present

University records show that names such as “Champlain” and “Faryon” were held in high regard even before the construction of the Nassau Mills (now Symons) campus.⁷ The name Champlain was eventually chosen for the University’s third college in 1964. In a time of heightened tensions between French- and English-speaking Canadians, the use of a prominent French explorer at a university college in Ontario was seen as an important sign of unity.⁸ Founding president Tom Symons observed that there was “warm and widespread support” for the new name, particularly noting the letters of approval from the Premier of Ontario and two francophone members of the Provincial Legislature.⁹ Other names, including Indigenous ones, were strongly recommended for the new university. A notable find in the Trent Library and Archives during the process of the Champlain Committee was a letter dated August 2, 1963 and later handwritten note from Trent’s founding president confirming that Lady Eaton “strongly recommends use of Indian [sic] names for our buildings, in particular, ‘Chemong.’”¹⁰ A 1965 document called “Trent University Fourth Report of the Committee on Names for University Buildings” affirms the ideas, having among its recommendations that “(t)here was general agreement that one of the Colleges or a major University building should bear an Indian [sic] name.”¹¹ Otonabee College, notwithstanding, the Committee was reminded through outreach that suggestions for a specific Indigenous-named College have not yet come to fruition.

5.2.2 Harm and the Impact of Colonialism

From an ethical and moral standpoint, the question of harm was raised by some committee members and those who specifically referenced Samuel de Champlain and his history in written responses to the Committee’s call for input – especially harm to Indigenous students and community members as caused by the Champlain identity, symbols, artwork, name and related language. Considerations of harm and the impact of colonialism seem to consistently come up in other institutions’ relevantly similar processes. Champlain was considered, by some scholars and respondents, to be comparably less harmful than other historical figures who were more directly involved in forms of violence including the formation of in the establishment of residential schools and related policies. The question of colonialism as a precursor to these events was often the elephant in the room. What was Champlain’s intent? Was it exemplary in the context of the times? Does this matter in the context of the issues of reconciliation today? Despite befriending Indigenous peoples, expressing a utopian view of intercultural marriage and friendship, and promoting peace between Indigenous enemies, Champlain accepted the entreaties by the Huron and Algonquin to form an alliance in their conflict with the Haudenosaunee.

More than one Indigenous respondent noted Champlain’s possible relationship to the Beaver Wars (c. 1609-1701), suggesting his choices of allies and participation in their conflicts may have contributed to suffering and violence. The impact of colonialism was also described by some respondents as resulting in excluding Indigenous perspectives. As one student said, “Celebrations of Samuel de Champlain are one-sided, for Indigenous people” and, like others, he followed this observation with the suggestion that rather than erasing history, a more collaborative, shared contextual understanding should somehow be made visible. Especially in light of the impacts and atrocities associated with residential schools, Trent as an educational institution should assume it is called upon to consider its role in addressing harm.

⁷ Trent University Library and Archives, Campus Planning Committee Minutes, 1962-1965, Minutes, 16th Meeting, 31 December 1963, Appendix D, “Report of the Committee Names for University Buildings,”

⁸ Trent University Library and Archives, Campus Planning Committee Minutes, 1962-1965, Minutes, “Second Report on the Committee of Names for University Buildings.” 25 February 1964.

⁹ Trent University Library and Archives, Board of Governors Minutes, Sept. 1963-Nov. 1964, Minutes, 28 May 1964.

¹⁰ Trent University Library and Archives, RG 2, Box 18, Item 11, Champlain College, Correspondence, etc., Letter from T.H.B. Symons to Flora Macrae Eaton, 9 August 1963.

¹¹ Trent University Library and Archives, Campus Planning Committee Minutes, 1962-1965, Minutes, 17 December 1965.

6. Issues

Based on original emails, articles, submissions and delegations, the Committee identified key issues to be addressed.

6.1 Symbolism and Artwork

6.1.1 Champlain Bust by Jérémie Giles

A flashpoint for students, the bust was identified by some as a symbol of oppression over Indigenous people and a trigger for feelings of hurt or harm. Pending the findings and recommendations of the Champlain Committee, the bust was removed from Champlain College and stored in the Archives at the Bata Library. The bust by artist Jérémie Giles has been described in negative terms as an object that evokes adverse reactions – or as an innocuous but unnecessary personification of a western-dominant worldview not in keeping with Trent’s focus on Indigenous education, reconciliation, and ways of knowing. It is not generally known that, as he created the bust of Champlain, the artist Giles was planning for the creation of a corresponding statue of the same size of the Algonquin Grand Chief Tessouat, with whom Champlain had, as Giles writes in his artist’s statement, “a relationship built on mutual respect.”¹² The three-metre statue of Champlain, for which the current Champlain bust was the prototype, was installed in Hull, Quebec in 2004. It was not until 2017 that Giles was able to successfully have his statue of Chief Tessouat installed at the Canadian Museum of History in Hull where it stands to this day as “the first and only historical figure on the grounds of this institution,” according to Giles. Despite this history, the committee considered the bust a flashpoint that should be seriously considered in the context of the analysis above.

6.1.2 Artwork by Charles Comfort

Similar to the bust of Champlain, artwork by Charles Comfort depicting an image of Samuel de Champlain was a focal point at the College (see Appendix A), identified as a negative image that lacked a sympathetic counterpoint expressing the Indigenous point of view. It, too, was temporarily relocated to the Archives pending the Committee’s findings. Though the artwork was less of a focal point than the bust of Champlain, it was similarly identified as a negative image that lacked a sympathetic counterpoint expressing the Indigenous point of view. Both images (based on research) are reflections of the era in which they were created more than true likenesses of Champlain, as there are no detailed, contemporary images of the explorer. In the case of Charles Comfort, there was no known intention on the part of the artist to create a corresponding piece of Indigenous work.

6.2 Language and Culture, Traditions & Taglines

The Committee considered the tagline, “Continuez mes découvertes,” the more recent rallying cry, “Champlain till I die,” and traditions like “Bon Temps weekend” on a spectrum of associations with Samuel de Champlain and their potential to be hurtful to individuals affected by the intergenerational impacts of colonialism. There was consensus among the Committee that additional training could be provided for Orientation Week for student leaders, but that the traditions and sayings that come and go at the College should remain in the hands of students and be resolved among them as an opportunity for learning among peers and supporting positive culture on campus. These efforts can be supported by the College Principal, Residence Life Staff, and College Fellows and friends who mentor students.

Through its discussions and review, the Committee identified a distinct lack of Indigenous language and history surrounding the identity, artwork, symbols and name at Champlain College – and specifically an Indigenous perspective responding to or corresponding with the current identity. Language and Culture were identified as central issues in the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee.¹³

As part of a university focused on Indigenous reconciliation, education and ways of knowing, Champlain College

¹² Trent University Library and Archives, Trent University Art Committee Records, Jérémie Giles, A Short Statement Concerning Samuel de Champlain’s Bust, unpublished letter, 31 October 2021.

¹³ National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (University of Manitoba, Reports, Truth and Reconciliation Reports, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, (2015): 2, https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf, Accessed on 5 July 2022.

has an opportunity to work with the local First Nations, Métis Council and Indigenous groups as well as Indigenous Studies and the First Peoples House of Learning to integrate more Indigenous language and history into the college milieu.

6.3 Cornerstones

According to archival documents, the cornerstones of Champlain College were laid in honour of Champlain as “the man who was both the founder of New France and the first explorer of the Trent Valley in which the University is located.” (See Appendix D for a visual of the cornerstones.) In a ceremony at the site in 1965, the cornerstones were laid by the premiers of Ontario and Quebec on the 350th anniversary of the month of Champlain’s journey down the Trent Waterway. The cornerstones were identified by the Committee as a key physical characteristic combined with a moment in history that explain, and also symbolize, the origins of the identity behind Champlain College. They represent the two languages of what were considered the “founding nations” of Canada at the time, but as foundational pieces of the College’s identity, they do not recognize the Indigenous languages of the First Nations of the region nor the place of Indigenous nations in the Trent Valley from time immemorial. The cornerstones of the original Champlain College building stand as a physical monument in one of its classic western expressions: “the monument to great men,”¹⁴ in this case, Samuel de Champlain. Indigenous commemorative practices are changing in the 21st century and should be considered.¹⁵ The Committee foresaw an opportunity to consider in its recommendations reopening the original founding of the College with a new ceremony that adds a third pillar to the French and English languages of Canada, recognizing Indigenous languages through the introduction of a new “cornerstone” symbol.

6.4 Name

The most frequently-referenced issue for all who take an interest in the identity of Champlain College, the name presents the central expression of the Samuel de Champlain identity, whether viewed positively, negatively or in neutral terms. The name of Champlain College is the most cited concern among audiences who provided input. The name of Champlain College is a signifier whose meaning has changed over its many decades. From the original intent of the University’s founding President as seen in archival documents, to the associations, traditions and meanings attached to it by students and alumni over the years, to a new lens of Indigenous truth and reconciliation today, the name of Champlain College has become a lightning rod. It is seen by some as a symbol of their connection to a hallowed collegiate experience at the archetypally Canadian institution they attended and others as questionable monument to colonization and its devastating impacts.

The Committee has seen another side to the issue of the Champlain name as something that has galvanized the community in an opportunity for ongoing education and the healthy questioning of traditions and their meanings.

¹⁴ Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), Janson qtd., 37

¹⁵ For example see, CJ Pentland, “Commemoration as Reconciliation: Indigenous History and Canada’s Heritage Designation System,” *iJournal* 6,2 (2021): 1-13.

7. Recommendations

Based on the investigation, delegations, written submissions, review of documentation, and considerations of Champlain in relief of other colonial figures – as well as a recognition of the mission of Trent University as an institution of higher learning that considers a multiplicity of perspectives – the Champlain Committee favoured an educational, contextual approach to addressing the issues that were identified.

The Champlain Committee particularly valued the input of Elders and First Nations rights holders and, in making the following recommendations, wishes to recognize that the impacts of colonization are experienced at their starkest and most visceral by Indigenous peoples and the treaty holders who took the time to share their perspectives. The Committee also felt deeply the ongoing dialogue that illuminated different viewpoints on the history of Samuel de Champlain, enlivened curiosity, and challenged assumptions – even confronted stereotypes – to replace polarized conclusions with further questioning and continued, nuanced conversation. It is in the spirit of a continuing conversation that these recommendations are offered. The University has, we believe, a responsibility to proactively respond to them in ways that address the serious issues raised by the many who came forth to share their views.

Recommendation 1: Champlain Bust by Jérémie Giles

Move the bust of Champlain permanently to the Archives or a location in the Bata Library, with a plaque explaining the background on Champlain and the impacts of colonialism with a description of why the bust was removed from Champlain College. The Committee recommends if possible that a corresponding piece of artwork of an Indigenous nature by an Indigenous artist of the treaty territory, to be approved by the Trent University Art Committee (TUAC), be considered as part of this educational display.

Recommendation 2: Charles Comfort Artwork

Permanently move the artwork by Charles Comfort to the Archives or a location in the Bata Library with contextual information about the reason for its relocation and preferably with a corresponding piece of Indigenous artwork to be approved by the Trent University Art Committee (TUAC).

Recommendation 3: College Traditions & Taglines

Traditions and taglines should be carefully considered by the Champlain College Student Cabinet in the context of current efforts to advance Truth and Reconciliation. Orientation Week training should be adapted to inform and educate students about the sensitivities, and students should consider and resolve these issues among themselves. These efforts can be supported by the College Principal, Residence Life Staff, and College Fellows and friends who mentor students. Champlain College should consider – after the appropriate outreach with representatives of Indigenous communities, TUNA, Elders Council and others – integrating more Indigenous language and history into its educational, social and cultural activities.

Recommendation 4: Cornerstones

Celebrate the addition of a third pillar to the French and English languages in recognition of Indigenous languages, in particular the *Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg* (*Anishnaabemowin*) language, through the introduction of a new “cornerstone” symbol to the College.

Recommendation 5: Champlain College Name

Keep the name of Champlain College and add historical and cultural context to the name by giving Indigenous names to the buildings / spaces (e.g. The Great Hall / quads of the College). Work with local First Nations Elders to name these spaces in ways that will bring Indigenous history to the forefront – and inform non-Indigenous students of colonial history.

Recommendation 6: Contextualize the History of Champlain

Add new historical interpretation, specifically drawing upon Indigenous Knowledge and current commemorative practices, including plaques and other means of contextualization, that explain the complex history of the

Champlain name and the evolving nature of the University's understanding of its meanings in the context of the traditional territories of the *Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg* in an era of truth and reconciliation.

Recommendation 7: An Indigenous name for Trent's Next College

Following outreach with Elders, local First Nations, students and others, endow the future college and residence, to be built at Trent University's Symons Campus by 2027, with an Indigenous name based on a recognized person, place or phrase in the *Anishnaabemowin* language, involving the local *Michi Saagiig* community. When the next college is built, hold a new cornerstone ceremony to recognize the new relationships and new chapter of Canadian history that we are entering.

Recommendation 8: Education & Dialogue

Nurture and enable ongoing collegiate and educational dialogue through Orientation Week training/talks and by funding an annual student panel event at Champlain College that continues to build scholarship on the issues of colonialism and its impacts.

8. Summary

In the end, the Committee was confronted with the knowledge that any conclusion would be unsatisfactory based on the pull of so many impassioned views on the importance of names and symbols. It was also faced with the imperative to pass judgment on a historical figure. We landed on an imperfect conclusion, as any would be under the circumstances: that Samuel de Champlain is deserving of judgment and scrutiny but, as some urged, not to be forgotten. Consensus was reached by the Committee based on an educational environment and perspective: that we have learned more through this process of questioning and that learning will be better enabled by keeping the Champlain name and continually placing it in the context of the history of the Nations at the time.

In particular, the Committee heeded the words of those Indigenous respondents and leaders who advocated for informing history instead of erasing it – and the reality that, if we erase history, it is likely to repeat itself and this cannot be allowed to happen.

By recommending the continuation of the Champlain name with historical context, and recommending Indigenous naming of particular structures and the next College as determined through extensive outreach with Elders and treaty holder First Nations, the Champlain Committee believes that truth, reconciliation and an understanding of history will be realized in its best form – through ongoing learning and dialogue.

Thank you.

Appendices

Appendix A: Background on Bust and Artwork

Bust of Champlain



Artist: Jérémie Giles

Location: Champlain College- steps leading to The Great Hall. Donation: Connie Burton in 2004

Press Release: <https://www.trentu.ca/newsarchive/presreleases/040624champlain.html>

Champlain Portrait



Artist: Charles F. Comfort L.L.D., R.C.A.

Location: Champlain College Fireside Lounge

Accession Number: 2001.089.1

Object Type: [Painting Oil](#)

Place and/or Date: 1965

Inscription: "Signed front - Comfort 65 Plaque(front): Samuel de Champlain / c. 1567 - 1635 / painted by Charles F. Comfort LL.D., R.C.A. Signed (back): #386 e C.F. Comfort Back (label): Samuel de Champlain 1567 - 1635. This representation of the distinguished Governor"

Description: "Portrait of Samuel de Champlain holding a quill and book. Colours used: grey, blue, yellow. No varnish, no glaze. Frame - wood in 4 sections: (1) gold coloured inner frame, (2) buff coloured bevelled edge (textured), (3) decorative edge -gold, grey and red"

Legend / 1965: Champlain Mural



Artist: Charles Comfort

Location: Bata Library

Donation: Charles Comfort

Description: Charles Comfort was an Honorary Member of the Champlain College Senior Common Room. This piece is a sketch of the large mural Comfort painted in the National Library in Ottawa and it was a donation of the artist himself to Trent.”

Source: Trent University Art Collection files

Appendix B: Selected Sources and Bibliography

The study of pre-Confederation, let alone 17th-Century, Canadian history is on the decline. Finding new studies into Champlain and particularly studies that embody Indigenous perspectives has been a difficult task. Writings on Champlain fall under three general categories of history, anthropology, and cartography. The years around the 400th anniversary of

Champlain's travels in Ontario led to some increased works in the literature. Nonetheless, works that specifically address Champlain and his Indigenous relations remain relatively scarce. The following list offers some publications that should be considered in the study of Champlain and his legacy.

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Grant, W.L. ed. Lescarbot: *The History of New France*. Volume II. Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1911.

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Appendix C: Trent University Statement of Affirmation and Support

Trent University honours the land upon which it is built, and its traditional occupants. It celebrates the imaginations of Indigenous peoples, their survival throughout the centuries, their knowledge developed over generations and their strength to endure.

Trent University has a long and distinguished history in the education of Indigenous peoples and in the education of others about Indigenous peoples. Trent's efforts and initiatives since its founding have demonstrated leadership and commitment to the creation of places of dignity and respect for Indigenous peoples and their knowledge and to the fostering of dialogue and discussion about Indigenous issues.

Trent intends to continue to lead by example and to remain at the forefront of higher education with respect to Indigenous peoples, by fostering their development, their cultures and their knowledge within the University and in society.

Trent expresses pride in the achievements of Indigenous graduates. It seeks to attract Indigenous students, staff and faculty, supporting them in their studies and their paths to their chosen careers. The University encourages them to recognize the contribution that they in turn can make to their communities, to Canada and the world.

Trent University established the Indigenous Education Council in 1993 to provide guidance and advice in these undertakings.

Source: Trent University, "We Offer Our Gratitude," www.trentu.ca/we-offer-our-gratitude

Appendix D: The Cornerstones Laid at Champlain College, 1965



trentu.ca/champlain-committee

