



Dr. Rob Summerby-Murray, President, Saint Mary's University
AAEDIRP MOU Signing Event
Dalhousie University
Collaborative Health Education Building, 5793 University Avenue
Wednesday, June 8, 2022, 2:15 PM – 3:45 PM

(Check against delivery)

Good afternoon.

I'm Rob Summerby-Murray, President, Saint Mary's University. My role today is to represent my colleagues across the Association of Atlantic Universities – the AAU.

Today's re-signing of the AAEDIRP MOU is notable for three reasons.

First, its renewal marks continuation of an important research partnership between the region's universities and the Nova Scotia Community College with the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs – the APC.

It is a unique partnership between higher education, First Nations and Inuit communities and their economic development organizations across the region.

The research studies and reports generated by the MOU are truly remarkable in their range and diversity, such as:

- Environmental initiatives; cleantech and renewable energy opportunities
- Socio-economic, business and community impacts of COVID-19
- Indigenous women in business and entrepreneurship
- youth labour market and readiness studies
- financial literacy of Indigenous PSE students
- Aboriginal businesses and partnerships in the aerospace sector and fisheries
- economic performance and impact studies and,
- Mi'kmaq and Maliseet language immersion programs

This is by no means an exhaustive list of AAEDIRP MOU generated reports and studies but just a sampling of the incredible scope of research partnerships between our universities and First Nations communities in Atlantic Canada.

The AAEDIRP MOU is also a model for ongoing communication and collaboration with Indigenous communities. It exemplifies the great opportunity for reconciliation and a renewed relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in our region.

Mutual respect for different ways of knowing and recognizing the intellectual contributions of Indigenous people and communities is essential to building trust, understanding, and sharing. The cohabitation of western science and Indigenous knowledge on campuses has the power of opening a dialogue among cultures and communities and enhancing our shared knowledge.

Finally, this partnership and its collaborative approach supports our sector's action plans on equity, diversity, and inclusion – EDI.

It increases our institutional capacity to integrate EDI in our research, teaching and learning. None of this would have occurred without the understanding and commitment of the Atlantic Policy Congress to the important role higher education plays in the development of First Nations and Inuit learners and communities.

It is also important to recognize the ongoing commitment of our Vice-Presidents Research to the mandate of the AAEDIRP MOU.

In particular, I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of Dr. Richard Isnor, Vice-President, Research, StFX University, in support of the MOU.

Richard updated the MOU to better reflect current conditions and re-energized the commitment among his colleagues as signatories to this important agreement.

In summary, the renewed AAEDIRP MOU is about partnership, collaboration and building research capacity to bolster economic development in Indigenous communities across our region.

A partnership in which university leaders across Atlantic Canada take great pride.

Thank you.
